



Copyright

  
Librarian

**Uttarpara Joykrishna Public Library**  
**Govt. of West Bengal**





# **HISTORY AND SOCIETY**







Prof. Nihar Ranjan Ray

# HISTORY AND SOCIETY

*Essays in Honour of  
Professor Niharranjan Ray*

*Editor*  
Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya

K P BAGCHI & COMPANY  
CALCUTTA

**First Published 1978**

The publication of the work was financially supported by the Indian Council of Historical Research. The responsibility for the facts stated, opinions expressed, or conclusions reached, is entirely that of the authors of the respective articles and the Indian Council of Historical Research accepts no responsibility for them.

Published by K. K. Bagchi on behalf of K. P. Bagchi & Company, 286, B. B. Ganguli Street, Calcutta-700 012, and Printed by S. N. Guha Ray at Sree Saraswati Press Ltd., 32, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Road, Calcutta-700 009.

**ESSAYS PRESENTED TO PROFESSOR  
NIHARRANJAN RAY**

**Organising Committee**

**Suniti Kumar Chatterjee**

**Barun De**

**Amita Ray**

**Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya**  
*(Editor)*

**Surajit Chandra Sinha**

**N. N. Bhattacharyya**

**Susanta Ghosh**  
*(Member-Secretary)*





## Editor's Note

Some of the friends and admirers of Prof. Niharranjan Ray, Emeritus Professor of the Calcutta University and Honorary Professor in the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, have gathered together to present a volume of essays in honour of him.

It would surely not be necessary to repeat the achievements of Prof. Ray. He has not been content with his scholastic work. Since the earliest days of his career he demonstrated a wide ranging interest in various aspects of public life—in journalism, library management, academic administration of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, as a member of the Rajya Sabha and later as an active and innovative member of the Pay Commission; and above all as a social thinker, who in recent years has endowed the study of literature, arts and civic life with the added dimension of concern for the social context in which aesthetic and economic happenings inevitably take place.

For reasons beyond the control of the Organising Committee, the time taken for the publication of the present volume has been very long. We duly apologise to the contributors for the inconvenience caused by this.

The Organising Committee always hoped this volume to be introduced by its Chairman, Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, whose sudden death has deprived it of this honour. Members of the Organising Committee express their profound sorrow for the sudden death of Professor Chatterjee.

Centre for Studies  
in Social Sciences  
Calcutta

DEBIPRASAD CHATTOPADHYAYA

July 17, 1977



# Contents

Frontispiece	... ..	<i>Facing Page</i>	<i>Title</i>
 <b>I <i>Methodology and General Issues Relating to Social Perspective</i></b>			
<b>F. R. ALICHIN</b>			
The Archaeological Significance of a Modern Indian Potter's Technique	... ..	...	1
<b>SATISH SABERWAL</b>			
Oral Data, Religious Literature and History: Notes from a Sociologist	... ..	...	15
<b>D. BOSE</b>			
Utilisation of Social and Cultural Anthropology in Historical Research: The Case of the Impact of Agriculture on Some South Indian Societies	... ..	...	25
<b>RATAN PARIMOO</b>			
Sociological and Formal Problems of Modern Indian Art: Study of an Approach	... ..	...	47
<b>I. D. SEREBRYAKOV</b>			
In Quest of Methodology: With Special Reference to Indian Kavya	... ..	...	55
<b>J. P. S. UBEROI</b>			
The Structural Concept of the Asian Frontier	... ..	...	67
 <b>II <i>Ancient India</i></b>			
<b>H. D. SANKALIA</b>			
Cultural Traditions <i>versus</i> Functional Activities in Stone Age and Other Archaeological Assemblages	... ..	...	79
<b>DILIP K CHAKRABARTY</b>			
Seals as an Evidence of Indus-West Asia Interrelations	... ..	...	93
<b>AMITA RAY</b>			
Harappan Art and Life: Sketch of a Social Analysis	... ..	...	117
<b>R. S. SHARMA</b>			
The Later Vedic Phase and the Painted Grey Ware Culture	... ..	...	133
<b>DEVANGANA DESAI</b>			
Social Background of Ancient Indian Terracottas (circa 600 B.C.-A.D. 600)	... ..	...	143
<b>DEBALA MITRA</b>			
Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara	... ..	...	169
<b>PRATAPADITYA PAL</b>			
Eight Nāyikās in Nepali Painting	... ..	...	187

	G. M. BONGARD-LEVIN			
	Some Problems of the Social Structure of Ancient India	...	199	
	WALTER RUBEN			
	The Development of the Town in Ancient India	...	229	
	DEBIPRASAD CHATTOPADHYAYA			
	Sources of Indian Idealism	... ..	239	
	ROMILA THAPAR			
	Origin Myths and the Early Indian Historical Tradition	...	271	
III	<i>Bengal</i>			
	ABDUL MOMIN CHOWDHURY			
	Pundra/Paundra-varadhana Bhukti in Early Bengal Epigraphs		295	
	SHAHANARA HUSAIN			
	Village Life in Early Medieval Bengal: A Study Based on the Subhasitaratnakosa	... ..	311	
	TREVOR LING			
	Buddhist Bengal, and After	... ..	317	
	N. N. BHATTACHARYYA			
	The Cult and Rituals of Dharma Thakur	... ..	327	
	HITESRANJAN SANYAL			
	Temple Promotion and Social Mobility in Bengal	...	341	
	SISIR KUMAR DAS			
	Bengali Linguistic Historiography	... ..	373	
	ASOK SEN			
	Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and the Education of Bengal	...	389	
	ASOK K. GHOSH			
	History of the Bengalees: The Unrecorded Period	...	419	
IV	<i>Mediaeval India</i>			
	A. B. M. HABIBULLAH			
	An Early Arab Report on Indian Religious Sects	... ..	433	
	HARBANS MUKHIA			
	The Ideology of the Bhakti Movement: The Case of Dadu Dayal	... ..	445	
	IQTIDAR ALAM KHAN			
	A Note on the Conception of Akbar's Religious Policy	...	455	
	ANIRUDDHA RAY			
	French Attitude to Sivaji: Some Observations	... ..	467	
V	<i>Modern Affairs</i>			
	BARUN DE			
	Complexities in the Relationships Between Nationalism, Capitalism and Colonialism	... ..	479	

# **BIPAN CHANDRA**

**Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class: 1936** ... 513

# **D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA**

**Sri Aurobindo and the Marxist on Civilisation and Culture** ... 539

# **DALE RIEPE**

**Science and Contemporary Philosophy of Science in India** ... 571

# **MARGARET CHATTERJEE**

**The Concept of Commitment: Some Clarifications** ... 599

**An Interview with NIHARRANJAN RAY** ... 613

**Bibliography of NIHARRANJAN RAY** ... 633

**Contributors** ... 641

## **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

Fig. 1 (No. 1-4)	—	Water Pots with globular bodies and wheel-thrown necks and rims	...	...	4
(No. 5-8)		Shallow carinated food bowls	...	...	4
(No. 9-10)		Cooking pots with deeper walls	...	...	4
Fig. 2 (No. 1, 2)		Shallow bowls and the small conical lid with knob	...	...	5
Plate I (No. 1-3)		(Description on page 9)	...	...	6
Plate II (No. 4-6)		(Description on page 10)	...	...	7
Plate III (No. 7-10)		(Description on page 10)	...	...	8
Fig. 1		Inter-elite Structure of later Mughal nobility			72
Fig. 2a		Traditional Concept of the Frontier as periphery	...	...	75
Fig. 2b	--	Structural Concept of the Frontier	...	...	75
Fig. (1-10)	--	Neanderthal tool kits: Denticulate	...	...	81
Fig. (1-7)		Neanderthal tool kits: Quina	...	...	81
Map		Tool-bearing Localities on the River Ralla Kalava near Renigunta, Dist. Chittor (A.P.)			82
		Stone Age Cultural Sequence on the Rallakalava near Renigunta	...	...	83-84
Plate I		Bronze dancing girl from Mohenjodaro	...	...	123
Plate II (Fig. 2)		Terracotta bull, Lothal	...	...	124
(Fig. 3)		Horse (?), Lothal	...	...	124
(Fig. 8)		Sheep-headed man, Harappa	...	...	124
(Fig. 5)		Dog painted on a sherd, Nevasa	...	...	124

Plate III (Fig. 4)	—	Sherd from Harappa: traditional checker board motif along with human and animal figures ... ..	125
	(Fig. 6)	— Painted Pottery of Harappan period, Lothal	125
	(Fig. 7)	— Painted pot sherd, Lothal ... ..	125
Plate IV	—	Dancing male from Harappa ... ..	126
Fig. 1	—	A <i>nāga</i> figurine from Patna ... ..	147
Fig. 2	—	A pre-Maurya Mother goddess from Buxar excavated from pre-N.B.P. Level ... ..	147
Fig. 3	—	A pre-Maurya Mother goddess from Buxar ... ..	147
Fig. 4	—	Pre-Maurya goddesses of Pāṭaliputra ... ..	148
Fig. 5	—	A dancing girl from Bulandibagh, Patna ... ..	148
Fig. 6	—	A female figure with vegetation motifs in ornaments, Buxar ... ..	150
Fig. 7	—	Maurya Mother goddesses from Mathura ... ..	151
Fig. 8	—	A Maurya goddess from Mathura ... ..	151
Fig. 9	—	Mother goddesses from Ahicchatrā ... ..	152
Fig. 10	—	A Maurya goddess from Saraimohana ... ..	152
Fig. 11	—	Pañcacūdā goddess with five symbols in Head-dress, Tamruk ... ..	154
Fig. 12	—	Sātavāhana heads from Nevasa ... ..	156
Fig. 13	—	A <i>nāgaraka</i> from Chandraketurgh, Kusān period ... ..	158
Fig. 14	—	Gupta heads from Ahicchatrā ... ..	162
Plate 1	—	A goddess with partner, Ahicchatrā ... ..	167
Plate 2	—	A garden party with dance and music, Mathura ... ..	167
Plate 3	—	A couple from Kauśāmbī ... ..	167
Plate 4	—	A female head from Mathura ... ..	167
Plate 5	—	Śiva and Pārvatī in a family scene ... ..	168
Plate 1	—	Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara, Nalanda Museum ... ..	173
Plate 2	—	Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara: Details of bust ... ..	174
Plate 3	—	Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara: details of Tārā ... ..	175
Plate 4	—	Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara: details of Bhṛkuṭī ... ..	175
Plate 5	—	Buddha with a monk, Yaśodhara and Rahula, Main temple, Nalanda ... ..	175
Plate 6	—	Details of the figure of the monk on plate 5 ... ..	175
Plate 7	—	Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara, Indian Museum, Calcutta ... ..	176
Plate 8	—	Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara, Indian Museum, Calcutta ... ..	176

Plate I	(Fig. 1)	—	Portraits of king Jitā Mitra Malla with his sons	189
Plate II	(Fig. 2)	—	A forlorn heroine ... ..	190
	(Fig. 3)	—	A forlorn heroine stretched out on a bed ...	190
Plate III	(Fig. 4)	—	A heroine eagerly preparing the bed ...	191
	(Fig. 5)	—	A jilted heroine deceived by her lover ...	191
Plate IV	(Fig. 6)	—	A daring heroine sets out to meet her lover ...	192
	(Fig. 7)	—	A slighted heroine is feigning anger at the late arrival of her lover ... ..	192
Plate V	(Fig. 8)	—	A heroine pretends impregnable anger ...	193
	(Fig. 9)	—	A heroine reconciled to her lover ...	193
Plate VI	(Fig. 10)	—	A Nepali Rāgamālā Painting ...	194
	(Fig. 11)	—	A deity placed upon a lotus, Nepali painting	194
Fig. 1		—	Huts, Midnapore District ... ..	349
Fig. 2		—	Śiva temples (1768–1773), Gaupur, Birbhum	349
Fig. 3		—	Krishna Ray temple (1685), Khanlla, Howrah	349
Fig. 4		—	Gopeśvara Śiva temple (1732), Baikunthapur, Burdwan ... ..	349
Fig. 5		—	Lakshmi-Narayana temple (1718), Metyala, Bankura ... ..	350
Fig. 6		—	A group of temples (Late 18th Cent.), Bawali, 24 Parganas ... ..	350
Fig. 7		—	Plan, single porched hut ... ..	351
Fig. 8		—	Plan, four porched huts ... ..	351
Fig. 9(a)		—	Plan, Śiva temple (1753), Syamganj, Kalna, Burdwan ... ..	351
Fig. 9(b)		—	Transverse section, above temple ...	352
Fig. 9(c)		—	Longitudinal section, above temple ...	352
Fig. 10		—	Plan, Madanamohana temple (1696), Bishnupur, Bankura ... ..	352
Fig. 11(a)		—	Plan, Sridharanatha temple (mid. 19th Cent.), Kharar, Midnapore ... ..	353
Fig. 11(b)		—	Plan, first floor, above temple ... ..	353
Fig. 11(c)		—	Transverse section, above temple ...	353





# **I METHODOLOGY AND GENERAL ISSUES RELATING TO SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE**



# The Archaeological Significance of A Modern Indian Potter's Technique

F. R. ALLCHIN

THE reconstruction of the techniques of prehistoric craftsmen depends upon archaeological discovery to supply the necessary data. In the case of the pottery that forms so ubiquitous a component of the material culture of later prehistoric and protohistoric peoples, it involves the accurate observation and study of whole pots and fragments from a given site, area or period. It needs to be supported, as far as possible by the discovery and excavation of potters workshops and kilns, and the collection of data relating to such items of equipment as wheels, dabbers, turntables, etc. All too frequently this support is not forthcoming and the archaeologist is faced by an assemblage of pots and sherds alone. Broadly speaking his evaluation will depend upon two types of investigation: straight technological examination, and the use of a variety of scientific tests to determine, in so far as relevant such matters as the chemical constituents of a glaze, etc. The present paper considers an aspect of the first of these in the light of observation of modern potters.

The archaeologist's work involves the excavation of sites, the collection of materials, and their interpretation in cultural terms. All too often he is ill-equipped to make such interpretations, and for matters of primitive technology he all too often lacks basic craft knowledge. Many of the interpretations of ancient crafts found in the pages of archaeological reports are implausible, and some are frankly fantastic. It is probable that a broad education in the elements of the crafts, linked with at least minimal practical experience, would serve to improve his writing. But it is also evident that the details of a modern craft, and this is certainly true of the potters, vary

considerably from one part of the world to another. Thus in making a reconstruction of the practice of any ancient potters it would almost certainly be helpful to find modern evidence derived from present-day craftsmen who might be expected to be somehow culturally related to them in terms of craft tradition. Indeed it may well be that the closer such a relationship is in space and time the greater the probability of significance, and vice versa. In any case the archaeologist is likely to end up with a number of alternate possibilities, and in deciding which is the more probable he must use not only his observation of the material itself, but also the implications of modern craft analogies.

It is commonplace for the archaeologist, faced with an assemblage of pots and sherds, to attempt to divide them according to techniques of manufacture into such groups as hand-made, wheel-thrown, moulded, etc. As a general rule he will claim to detect the first category by the irregularities of form, uneven thickness and body of the clay, and by imperfect rotundity; the second, by such diagnostic traits as the spiral swirl on the base, representing the mark of the string used by the potter to cut the pot off while the wheel was still turning, or the greater regularity of thickness, form and striations left by the fingers upon the surface, and particularly the inner surface, of the pots. For moulded pots one expects to find none of these features, but often traces of the junctions of separate moulds, and a predilection for relief decorations. Such simple generalisations do not however work in all cases. In India the characteristic spun wheel, which generally replaces the foot wheel cast of the Indus, imposes peculiar limitations on the potter. The widespread employment of the paddle and dabber also gives his products a special character. So too does the very general predilection for vessels with rounded rather than flat bases.

In a typical Indian assemblage from Early Historic and even Proto-historic times evidence for the use of the wheel is largely obscured: the bases are very frequently rounded, so that the marks of cutting from the wheel are absent; the body of the pot is largely without any indicative striations, and often no more than the neck and the rim bear them. Broadly speaking in such assemblages there are two or three major groups of forms. The first, occupying up to half of the total, consists of water-pots with more or less globular bodies, and with apparently wheel-thrown necks and rims (Fig. 1, Nos. 1-4); the second is a class of shallow food bowls, generally with a marked angle between the walls and the base and hence often referred to as carinated, but sometimes curved (Fig. 1, Nos. 5-8); and the third is a class of cooking pots with similarly rounded bases but with rather deeper walls (Fig. 1, Nos. 9-10). The method of manufacture of none of these vessels is immediately apparent. However,

## MODERN INDIAN POTTER'S TECHNIQUE

observation of potters in several parts of India has afforded clear accounts of the manufacture of globular pots of the first group, and the technique may be widely observed today without difficulty. We give a brief account of the version current in Daman below. It is open to doubt whether archaeologists would have detected or correctly interpreted the diagnostic traits of this technique without the assistance of modern craft-analogies. The method of manufacture of the second and third groups is equally unclear, and has been the subject of considerable speculation. In general the pots have been described by archaeologists as made on the wheel, though how the rounded bases were formed remains obscure. Published sources do not appear to give much help, and one gathers that modern analogy is not forthcoming. Over the years we gave some thought to the matter and several equally improbable solutions suggested themselves. For instance, in 1954 I noted that a group of black-and-red ware bowls, 'all showed clear traces of wheel throwing on the upper parts of the walls, whilst the rounded bases, often below a clearly defined angle, were formed by hand after cutting from the wheel'.<sup>1</sup> Some fifteen years ago I first saw a technique in use in north Mysore which seemed to provide an explanation of how these pots were made, and more recent observation of a group of potters in Gujarat has supplied confirmation of this hypothesis. I shall now describe the technique in terms of these two observations. In each case I shall allude briefly to the role of the wheel in the workshops concerned, as this suggests interesting relationships of male and female spheres of work.

The first occasion was in 1957 when I visited a group of potters at Mudgal in north Mysore. Subsequently I wrote a short paper describing part of their work and commenting on its archaeological significance.<sup>2</sup> I noted that the technique in question seemed to provide the simplest and most natural way of making a range of bowls and other vessels. It involved no wheel, but instead used a rudimentary form of turntable, made by setting an earthenware saucer upon another inverted saucer. A variant involved resting the saucer on the mouth of a broken water pot. This apparatus produced vessels of a regularity of form and bearing such regular striations on their surface that I believed it would deceive most archaeologists into thinking that they were thrown upon the wheel. The most common types of pot made by the method were shallow food bowls, described to me by one of the potters as 'poor men's thālīs'. I remarked that these vessels bore a close generic resemblance to the shallow tray bowls which form a dominant feature of the Painted Grey ware, the Northern Black polished ware and the Black-and-red ware. Accordingly the technique might be regarded as the most likely mode of manufacture of this type when it occurred anciently in all these

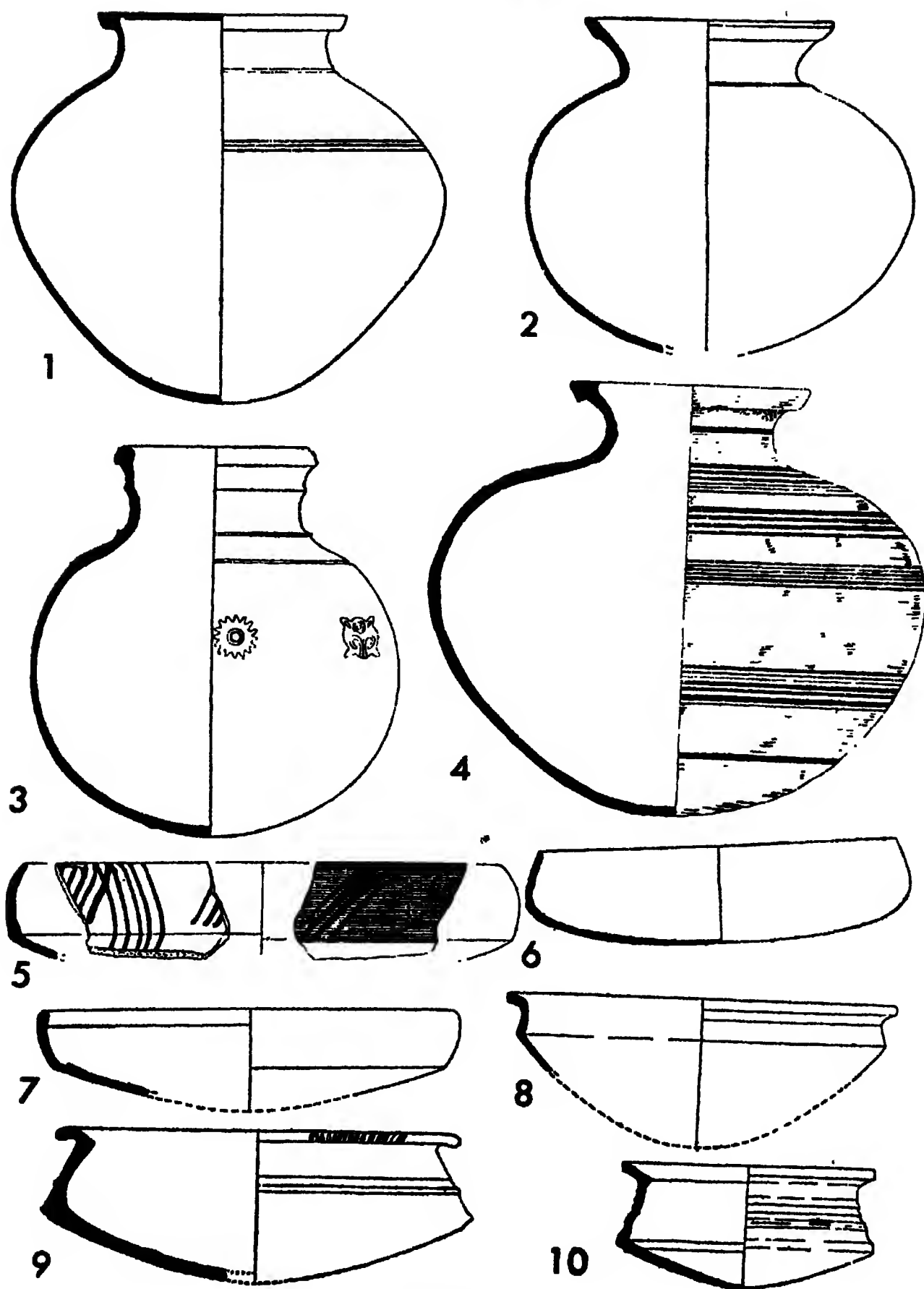


Fig. 1. Scale 1:4

MODERN INDIAN POTTER'S TECHNIQUE

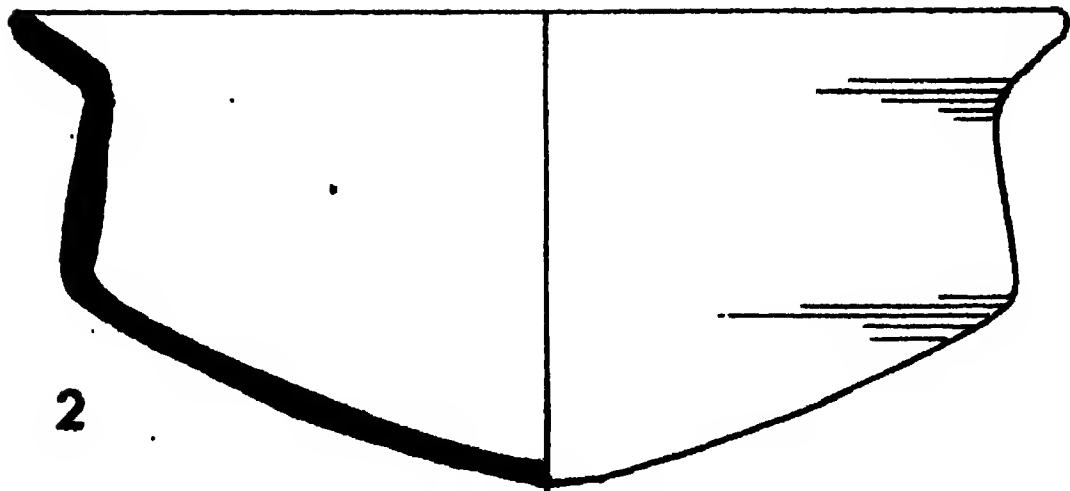
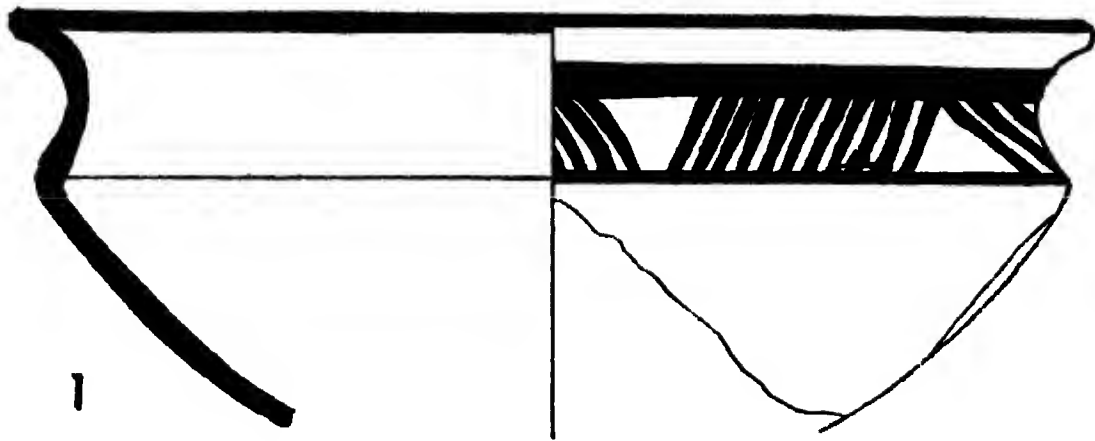


Fig. 2. Scale 1:2





No. 1



No. 3



No. 2

MODERN INDIAN POTTER'S TECHNIQUE

PLATE II

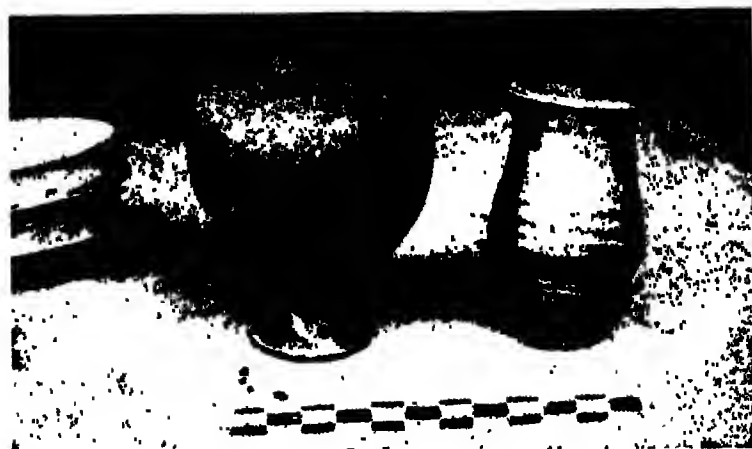
No. 4



No. 5



No. 6





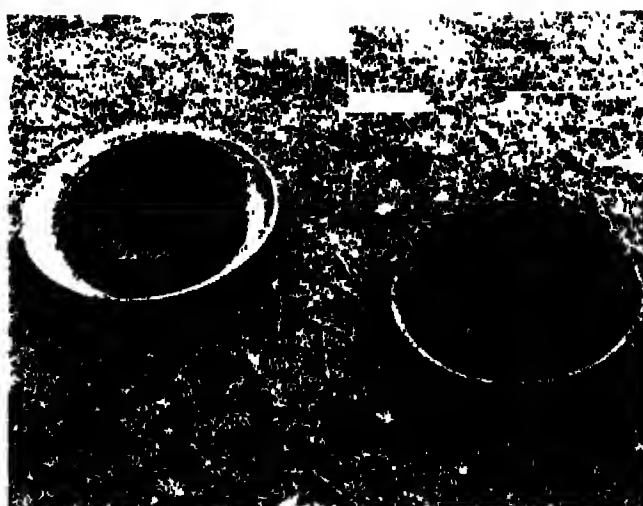
No. 7



No. 9



No. 8



No. 10

wares. At Mudgal there were also made by the same method cooking pots with somewhat higher walls and a clear angle between the walls and the rounded base, and a curious type of rimless vessel with a sharply narrowing mouth. This we were told was used for boiling milk. At Mudgal this potting technique was the exclusive property of women. Men were meanwhile throwing pots on the typical spun wheel and subsequently beating them with paddle and dabber to produce globular water pots by the well known routine, substantially similar to that which I shall briefly describe below.

During the past years I have seen quantities of pottery from excavations of many periods, and from many parts of India. This has tended to confirm my belief that the turntable technique provided the most convenient way to make a range of common Indian pottery types. While in Gujarat in 1967 (on the first season of the Cambridge University-Archaeological Survey of India joint expedition to coastal Gujarat), we visited a potters colony where an interesting variant of the Mudgal technique was being practised. The products of these Gujarati potters were particularly interesting because among them were vessels which were virtually identical to another type familiar from archaeological contexts.

In November 1967 we visited a colony of potters in the village of Wadkund (Varakundā) near the banks of the Daman Ganga river in the former Portuguese territory of Daman. The clay was collected from the river bank. It was washed in a series of small pits and when of the right consistency was cut into blocks of considerable weight, and covered with damp sacking until required for use. Both men and women were working at the time of our visit. The men were throwing pots on typical Indian spun wheels and, after removal from the wheel, beating them to their final size and shape. The technique does not differ from that observed and recorded in other parts of India, but as I obtained a good series of photographs it seems worth describing it once more. The wheel is made of wood, weight being added by the addition of clay. It is pivoted on a short iron spike and stands only a few inches above the ground. Rotation is achieved by inserting a stave in a recess in the upper side of the wheel and revolving it to the required speed while standing over the wheel. The actual throwing is done by the potter squatting beside the wheel (Pl. 1, No. 1). The potter's hands are free and employed much as they would be on a foot wheel (Pl. 1, No. 2). The pot is cut from the wheel with a string and at this stage shows a distinctive swirl on the base. It bears typical striations of the outer surface, as a result of the contact of the potter's hands with the revolving clay (Pl. 1, No. 3). It is now put aside until sufficiently dry to permit beating. This is accomplished with a paddle of wood and dabber, or anvil, of stone. A range

of both tools was available and used as needed (Pl. II. No. 4). The dabber is held in the left hand and inserted in the pot: the paddle is held in the right hand and applied to the outer surface (Pl. II. No. 5). As the work proceeds the potter sprinkles the pot with powdered wood ash, probably to prevent the paddle from sticking, but doubtless producing a significant change in the surface behaviour when fired. As the process advances progressively longer and thinner paddles are employed. The final form of the pot has more than twice the volume it had when taken from the wheel (Pl. II. Fig. 6). It should be noted that now no more than the rim and top three inches of the neck bear any visible traces of the wheel. The globular body and the partly flattened underside bear only the traces of the beating they have received, in the form of a series of overlapping and very shallow facets. These are particularly noticeable on the interior. The outside is slightly roughened by the conjunction of paddle and wood ash (this roughening may later be removed by burnishing). After firing if such a pot is broken the sherds have a characteristic 'feel', and once known this can be detected in sherds from other contexts.

While the men were thus engaged with the wheel, the women were making pots by another method. They took handfuls of clay corresponding in size to the vessel they were to make, and moulded them between their hands into thick bun shaped discs. Each disc was now placed in the centre of a shallow saucer of about eleven inches diameter. This saucer was placed on a board with a suitable concavity in its upper face. The thumb of the right hand was now pressed into the middle of the disc of clay so as to make a crude thumb pot (Pl. III. No. 7). The saucer was held or rotated, as desired, by the left hand. When the central hollow had been sufficiently enlarged the potter took a stone dabber (identical to those used for beating the wheel-thrown pots), and while rotating the saucer she started gently to beat the interior of the pot, from time to time wetting the dabber in a nearby bowl of water (Pl. III. No. 8). The dabber was then laid aside, a freshly soaked rag taken in the right hand, and while continuing to rotate the saucer slowly with the left hand, she drew up the walls, holding the rag between the clay and her fingers and keeping the thumb on the inside of the vessel (Pl. III. No. 9). In this way the desired form was obtained and the completed pot put aside to dry in its saucer. The walls and rim show regular striations, closely resembling if not indistinguishable from those of a wheel-thrown pot, and the interior of the base shows traces of the dabbing process, often in the form of a regular pattern of shallow depressions (Pl. III. No. 10).

If we examine a completed vessel after firing, we notice several features. The bowl consists of three elements: the curved base, taking the form of the saucer in which it was made and frequently showing traces of facetting on the

inside and a thinness of section as a result of the beating it has received; the walls, usually, in the products of this workshop, separated from the base by a more or less clear cut angle (of the sort often referred to by archaeologists as a carination); and the everted rim. Both the latter elements bear regular horizontal striations. According to the quantity of clay selected the diameter of the base can be varied, up to the maximum diameter of the chosen saucer. So too may the height of the walls, their shape and angle be varied, and by increasing the walls in this way the shallow food bowls of our photographs can be transformed into a common type of cooking pot. There can also be considerable variation in the shape and size of the rims.

Among other types of pot made by the women of Wadkund were small convex lids with flattened central knobs. The main part of the lid was made in the form of a shallow bowl and when leather hard was removed from the saucer, turned over and the knob luted on. We did not record other details of the finishing of the pots, nor did we see the loading of a kiln, nor its firing. But we watched typical burnishing with strings of beads held between the hands. The firing was in open kilns, the general colour produced being a good red. However some of the carinated dishes had fired black inside, presumably as a result of their being stacked one on top of the other in the kiln, and therefore deprived of oxygen during firing.

Comparing the turntable techniques of Mudgal and Wadkund, we notice some similarities and equally significant variations. The basic equipment varies slightly. At Wadkund the saucer was at first rested on a round concavity in a board, and only after transferred to another, inverted, saucer. At Mudgal the saucer was either rested on a flat disc, or sometimes on the mouth of a water pot, broken off around the shoulder and set firmly in the ground. At both places a dabber, rag and supply of water were the only other requisites. At Wadkund the bun-shaped lump of clay was first hollowed by the thumb, then enlarged with the dabber, and finally formed with the fingers. At Mudgal the clay was beaten out into a flat disc which was folded in around the edges, like pastry, and then lifted on to the saucer. At Wadkund the rotation was by the left hand alone; while at Mudgal it was by a conjunction of the big toe of the right foot and the left hand. At both places shallow food bowls, although of different forms, were the chief pots made by the method. Technically speaking, the smooth curve of the junction of walls and base of the Mudgal bowls, or the sharper angularity of the 'carinated' Gujarat examples are no more than matters of fashion, and depend upon the whim of the potter. So too does the presence of a rolled or everted rim. Although it is still theoretically possible for such pots to be made on the wheel or by other techniques, we are frankly doubtful whether the Indian potter has ever done so. We are inclined to think that if the modern Indian potter finds

this technique most suitable and natural for making bowls of these types, his ancestors may anciently have done likewise.

It is not the purpose of this paper to review in any detail the archaeological contexts from which related types occur; but some brief remarks may not be out of place. At Mudgal we noted three such forms: the shallow bowls, which we called the 'poor men's *thālīs*'; vessels of about the same diameter but with narrow mouths and no rims; and cooking and water pots of roughly similar, but expanded, form, and with the addition of rims.<sup>3</sup> The first of these demand comparison with one of the regularly recurring variants in the shallow bowls of the PGW, NBP, Black-and-red and Rouletted wares, as we noted in our earlier paper.<sup>4</sup> Taken as a group these forms extend over a great part of India and Pakistan, and occur throughout the first millennium B.C., and into the first millennium A.D. Although the other variants of this type are not made at Mudgal, the technique suggests itself as the most natural way to make this common class of vessel. The second, rimless vessels, are much less common, and were probably used for milk boiling (as modern analogy suggests). They do occur occasionally in the archaeological record, for instance in the Ganges valley during the first millennium B.C., and in succeeding centuries.<sup>5</sup> The third type has many variants, depending upon the presence of a sharp angle between the walls and base, and the height at which this angle is situated. It occurs extremely widely in space and time, from the first millennium B.C., onwards to the present. It shows a great variety in the form of its rims, but these in no way indicate the basic method of manufacture, which is equally apparent throughout.

Of the forms of pot noted at Wadkund only two need detain us: the shallow bowl, and the small conical lid with knob. There can be little doubt that, functionally speaking, the former is also an extension of the *thālī*, food bowl, type, separated from the Mudgal bowls by its comparatively heavy rim, and by the sharper angle between base and walls. The form, as we saw it being made, appears to be substantially the same as the carinated bowls of Jorwe, Chandoli and Prakash, etc., and thus as one of the hall-marks of the Jorwe culture, during the second half of the second millennium B.C.<sup>6</sup> It is probable that if drawings were available for a range of the modern vessels they would be found to overlap to a remarkable extent with the range of the type in the Jorwe sites. The specimen we illustrate in Fig. 2 was chosen at random and was the only modern example we had time to draw. A wider selection would undoubtedly greatly strengthen our case. It has hitherto been common for archaeologists to write of the Jorwe bowls as 'made on a fast wheel', with 'uniformly-built thin walls with regularly parallel striations', etc. It has been claimed that 'some of the shapes like the carinated bowl . . . definitely seem to have been fashioned in parts and then luted

(together)'.<sup>7</sup> A more plausible suggestion mentions the rounded bases as 'fashioned in moulds and then possibly dabbered'. This may well be a recognition of the forming technique we have described—although the saucer should scarcely be described as a mould. The other form noticed at Wadkund was a small convex lid with central knob. The form is very similar to that of the black burnished lids often found in association with grave goods in the south Indian iron age graves, and must provide a convincing hypothesis for how these were made, as do many of the other forms found in association with them. Such lids are also found widely diffused in space and time.

In both the cases we have studied the technique was employed exclusively by women. It involves a stone dabber, a rudimentary saucer and a certain amount of hand forming. It may be argued that this rotary device is so different from the conventional turntable of modern potters (in which a flat disc is pivoted on a metal point) that the name is inappropriate. Even in India there is another, relatively more advanced turntable in use for making large heavy pots. This consists of two stone discs, one above the other, pivoted by a central boss and corresponding hollow. These appear to have been in use in the subcontinent at least since the first millennium B.C. But in spite of this we believe that the term turntable is still the best description of the apparatus we have reported. We are reluctant to suggest the date of its first appearance and subsequent diffusion. Suffice it to say that there seems little if any evidence for it in the Indus civilization, and that, whatever its origins, it gained currency particularly in post-Harappan times, spreading throughout northern and western India and the Peninsula, and appearing as a principal technique of the makers of the Black-and-red ware, Painted Grey ware, and Northern Black Polished ware. In general it appears to have been used alongside a typically Indian wheel and beater routine for making the larger globular water pots and jars of coarse pottery. Whether this can be taken as evidence of a sexual division of labour, comparable with that observed in the modern crafts, is not certain, but in view of the very widespread masculine monopoly of the wheel, it seems that it is to be expected. Also we have been struck again and again by the underlying resemblance of some of the women's techniques and those of dough making, and this too may suggest the same thing. We have not made any systematic study of modern or ancient potters of Southeast Asia, but even a casual glance suggests that the Indian techniques we are discussing have many analogies in that region, and we are led to conjecture that this may have been the source from which they reached India. Finally we repeat our conclusion that such reconstructions of ancient techniques may best be achieved when this sort of modern analogy is available, and when the history of at least some of the forms can be traced back in the archaeological record with almost no break.



REFERENCES

1. My Ph.D. thesis, 'The development of early cultures in the Raichur Doab of Hyderabad' (London, 1954). pp. 293-94.
2. C.f. 'Poor men's thālis', *BSOAS* XXII 1959. pp. 250-57.
3. F. R. ALLCHIN, *ibid.* The types are visible in Pls. IIIa, IIIb, and IIa and IIb respectively.
4. F. R. ALLCHIN, *ibid.* pp. 255-57.
5. For example at Ahicchatra. *Ancient India* 1. Fig. 1, No. 12.
6. To cite but one instance, Chandoli. See S. B. DEO and Z. A. ANSARI, *Chauloli thic Chandoli* (Poona, 1965). Fig. 27.
7. DEO and ANSARI, *loc. cit.* 1965. pp. 48-49.

# Oral Data, Religious Literature and History: Notes from a Sociologist

SATISH SABERWAL

IN a recent essay addressed to the sociologists, Professor Arvind Shah has reviewed many of the interactions between sociology and history in the context of scholarship on India spread over more than a hundred years.<sup>1</sup> When the potential for such interaction is viewed from the perspective of the historians, another set of issues moves into focus, and a sociologist might discuss some of these, especially in paying tribute to an historian who sees himself as "a student of historical sociology".<sup>2</sup> Such an exercise has academic warrant too, for just as the sociologist cannot move forward, in such areas as the nature of urban centres or of the colonial society, without substantial historical help, so too does the historian need a sociological base for advancing into social history. This essay begins with some reflections on the locus of historical data generally; then it reviews some recent uses of unorthodox data sources in historical enquiry, especially in Africa; and concludes with a reference to some current work seeking to relate ancient Hindu literature to its sociohistorical setting.

## SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF DATA

The historian's craft relies very heavily on data derived from *documents* prepared for other purposes, that is, documents prepared by people in the course of running their own lives by their own lights. In other words, while

Romila Thapar and C. N. Venugopal very kindly commented on an earlier draft of this essay.

<sup>1</sup> A. M. Shah, "Historical sociology: A trend report", in *Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology* (M. N. Srinivas and others, eds.), Bombay, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> Niharranjan Ray, *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society: a Study in Social Analysis*, Patiala, 1970, p. 108.

the conscious preparation of historical records, time capsules, and the like is a relatively recent development, all societies leave behind *precipitates*, formed in the course of their own activities; it is these precipitates that the historian seeks to locate and recover, and then to connect, with appropriate modes of inference, with the human experience whose residue it is. The hunter's flint chips in a prehistoric site, the mummies in Egyptian tombs, the Asokan pillars, and the *Ain-i-Akbari*, these are all precipitates from particular societies, recovered by the historian and turned into documents, and then interpreted by him for information on the originating society.

To be able thus to interpret his documents, the historian needs a *critical apparatus* which enables him to distinguish between different documents from a single originating society, to understand these documents, individually and collectively, and to build certain tests of validity and reliability into the inferential process, tests which would underlie that consensus which defines the scholarly enterprise in any discipline. Each series of documents requires of the historian a distinctive critical apparatus, a distinctive epistemology. The precipitates, the documents, carry within them potential information, and this potential is turned into knowledge when an appropriate epistemology assays the documents.

From flint chips one may argue about a society's technology, fauna, and gastronomy, and from Curzon's diaries one may argue about colonial motives; but a world of difference separates the two styles of inference. These would have in common only the most general principles of logic, probability, and the like. Few human evolutionists would feel entirely at home in the contemporary historian's archives, and vice versa. One major difference between the data sources is the efficiency with which information is stored in them. The flint chips, the Asokan pillars, and Curzon's diaries lie along a rising curve, with their authors increasingly aware of the importance of information and of the ways of storing it.

Let me now advance a series of interconnected propositions. Very generally, the greater the division of labour in a society, the more complex is its role structure, and therefore the more efficiently must it code information internally in order to facilitate effective coordination between the various roles. It is this internally coded information, however informally done, which would become the precipitate for the historian. The more complex the society, then, the greater the mass of information likely to be available to him. In other words, what information one can assemble depends, in part, upon the texture of the society one is examining. So the kinds of questions one may ask and the closeness of weave one may achieve in historical reconstruction would vary from period to period and from society to society. Consequently, corresponding to the array of data sources there has to be a

parallel array of specialities and of epistemologies, and it is rather late for any one historian to try to master them all.

Compared to work in well charted areas, with data bases and epistemologies firmly established, the problems are immense for an historian in an unmapped area, wishing to reconstruct the nature of human experience in a society new to the historical enterprise. He may have to begin with a search for information possibly stored in precipitates of an unaccustomed sort; and having located these, he would have to develop epistemologies which would enable him to move, efficiently and reliably, to the experiences which did, in the first place, generate the precipitates he analyses.

The nature of the problem can be illustrated with reference to a preliminary enquiry into the nature of ethnic relations in Chhota Nagpur by Majid Hayat Siddiqi.<sup>3</sup> The customary data sources appear to suggest strongly the Munda took the first steps towards state formation towards the end of the first millennium, but the record is more or less blank from then on to 1800 A.D., when the colonial records begin to reveal for Munda country a complex state structure with rather substantial feudal underpinnings. In reconstructing the processes that comprised this development, if the archives, the inscriptions, and the like are unhelpful, where should one look for a breakthrough?

Recent advances in African history suggest that Munda society itself might be a good place to search and that one might look for their own traditional mechanisms for storing information concerning themselves.<sup>4</sup> How can the historian locate such mnemonics economically? To answer this we have to repeat the principle that a society's informational precipitate arises in its own phenomena, its own structures, its own purposes. To locate the precipitates, then, the society's overall structures, and the purposes characteristically pursued therein, have to be determined: this would suggest what kinds of information its members routinely employed, and how they stored it; that is, what kinds of information they created and stored while pursuing their myriad purposes. The reconstruction of erstwhile social structures may be done either by the social anthropologist or by the historian who has learnt the appropriate skill.

The principle that a society's informational precipitate arises in its own structures and purposes may be useful to historians generally. It would imply (1) that an historian would begin with a model of the society and the period to be explored; (2) that he would use it to guess the range of purposes

<sup>3</sup> "Ethnic Group relations and the colonial context; a restatement of the history of Chota Nagpur under British rule." Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, mimeographed, 14 pages, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Vansina has surveyed the range of such mechanisms. See his *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (tr. by H. M. Wright), Chicago, 1965, pp. 36-39.

pursued in that period, and the kinds of information these might have precipitated; and (3) that upon locating such precipitates in the expected (or unexpected) places, the new evidence would help refine the original model, thus moving closer to the experience one had set out to reconstruct.<sup>5</sup>

Recent work, by historians and anthropologists, has renewed our awareness of a universally available precipitate: human memories. These may relate to relatively recent events, experienced by persons now alive, or these may recall events, whose memory has been transmitted through the generations down to one's informants. We note in passing that, in turning to informants for hitherto unrecorded data, the historian joins other social scientists who routinely engage in such "fieldwork". A corpus of material transmitted orally for some generations, may have been committed to writing at some point in its career, and may reach the historian in this form. Epistemologies developed for oral data would also apply to the latter sort of sources. The rest of this paper is concerned with the historical use of such memories and the corresponding sources. I begin with Tom Kessinger's use of oral data, elicited during field-work in a village, in conjunction with village-level records.

#### SOCIAL CHANGE AND HISTORY

What the sociologist calls social change strikes the historian as material for social history, and this equivalence holds, regardless of level, for the local community as well as for the nation-state. The equivalence implies a give and take, but the historian and the sociologist in India, in recent decades, have tended to quarry at different levels and this, among other things, has tended to keep them apart. Just as the sociologist and the social anthropologist, having exhausted their quarry—synchronic analysis of small local communities, look for larger units in historical depth, they meet the historian, with his diachronic view, travelling towards the small local community in search of real persons, in working social relationships, spread over time.

One such recent traveller, Tom Kessinger, has struck gold in a Punjabi village.<sup>6</sup> *Vilyatpur* is superb as a study both in community history and in social and economic change in modern India. Kessinger's questions arise in the work as much of sociologists as of demographers and economic historians. The census and the like have given us gross magnitudes for population

<sup>5</sup> The heuristic model proposed here is of a piece with one employed during social anthropological fieldwork in an industrial town; see my "The first hundred days: leaves from a field diary", in *Encounter and Experience: Personal Accounts of Fieldwork* (A. Beteille and T. N. Madan, eds.), Delhi, 1975.

<sup>6</sup> *Vilyatpur 1848-1968: Social and Economic Change in a North Indian Village*, Berkeley, 1974.

growth, urbanization, occupational categories, migratory streams, and so forth; but these sources do remain silent over such questions as: who moves? which sorts of social groups does he come from? why does he move? how does his move influence the structure of the groups of his origin? To questions such as these, the answers change with time as the larger social configuration itself changes. Kessinger's achievement lies in documenting the nature of this variation for one village, carrying through what others had for years been wistfully suggesting.

The data available in India for a community history take a multi-quantal jump when the colonial regime begins to create records for its own purposes.<sup>7</sup> While the *Ain-i-Akbari* allows Kessinger to determine who dominated the villages in this region during the sixteenth century, by disclosing, *mahalwise*, the caste of zamindars responsible for paying revenue, it is only for 1848, with an account of the village prepared by "the British Settlement Officer and his numerous Indian assistants", that Kessinger can reconstruct closely the patterns of village society and economy, noting details down to the individual family, its size, its landholding, its pattern of cultivation, and so forth.

Between 1848 and 1968 Kessinger weaves a genealogical net, using data from the official village records, the pilgrimage records of the *pandas* at Hardwar, and the informants' recall of their own families. Into this net can be fitted discrete bits about births, deaths, education, family composition, occupations, travel and migration, landownership and land use, spread over a hundred and twenty years. The net retains many who have long since left the village, thus documenting the variant consequences of migration in different strata of village society. Other factors in village life, say the pull of urban, industrial opportunities, can then be appraised against the backdrop of this genealogical net.

To sample Kessinger's findings, consider the following. For these twelve decades, Kessinger distinguishes between five major demographic patterns for the village families: *terminal*, marking the end of a family owing to the lack of a male heir; *straight line*, with the family reproducing itself steadily with one son in each generation; *diamond*, with growth initially and, following a decline or absence of male heirs, termination in subsequent generations;<sup>8</sup> *gradual pyramid*, with sons multiplying slowly in each generation; and finally the *rapid pyramid* with sons multiplying rapidly in each gene-

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Dilbagh Singh, of Jawaharlal Nehru University, and others working on medieval Rajasthan history are turning up village records in state archives which may allow them to reconstruct the main features of village society with much clarity; but their sources are rather thinner, and oral data for that period absent, and therefore their accounts would necessarily remain much less detailed than those for the modern period.

<sup>8</sup> In this analysis Kessinger defines the "family" as "each separate property group in 1848 and all of its descendants." (p. 97.)

ration. It is from the pyramiding families, especially those growing rapidly, that sons went out—to the West Punjab canal colonies in 1892 and 1921, to Australia during the last decade of the nineteenth century, to England during the 1950's and the 1960's, and individually wherever else an opening was noticed.

Smaller families have been much more likely to hold their sons back: going abroad has always been somewhat hazardous; and the risk with single sons, when the line might die out altogether, would be unacceptable. To gain wealth abroad and to lose an only son would be pointless; for the game, until very recently, was to improve the family's standing within the universe of one's agnates in the village. In the status league of the village, the competition was between families in the village, and what counted was the land owned within the village: the son went abroad in order to enable his family to add an acre or two to its land at home.

Since villages from this region have contributed far more than proportionately to migrants abroad from India, their incomes, used to compete for local agricultural land, have pushed its prices to levels which are exceptionally high compared to other parts of India. In this context, some village landowners have seen advantage in selling their holdings in Vilyatpur in order to buy much more land in Rajasthan or Uttar Pradesh. This is a mark of major change in the past decade or so, of a "decline of the community as a referent". The framework for comparisons may continue to be one's kinsmen, but these comparisons can wait for the visits and the weddings, from year to year; the need to make them within the village in the course of the daily round is becoming weaker.

### ORAL TRADITION IN AFRICAN HISTORY

For Kessinger, the oral data serve to supplement the records—whether from the district office or from the folios of the *pandas* at Hardwar—but the dependence on oral data has had to be very much greater in the quest for Africa's past. Prior to contact with and colonization by the Europeans, the written sources for subsaharan Africa refer only to the Moslem North and the coastal areas; those in the east had been the haunts of Arab traders at least since the tenth century—but their activity was too thin to generate copious records.<sup>9</sup> Inland peoples had not been literate. To reconstruct their past, the historian has had to turn to many unorthodox sources of data<sup>10</sup>: the distribution of the sickle cell in ethnic groups, testifying to earlier

<sup>9</sup> Gervase Mathew, "The East African Coast until the coming of the Portuguese", in *History of East Africa* (R. Oliver and G. Mathew, eds.), vol. 1, Oxford, 1963.

<sup>10</sup> For a general review, see D. F. McCall, *Africa in Time-Perspective: a discussion of Historical Reconstruction from Unwritten Sources*, Boston, 1964.

passage through malarial areas; divergences between the lexical stocks of related languages, suggesting the likely dates of separation between their speakers; constructing, for a family of languages, their proto-language, a pointer towards the probable area of origin of those who spoke that proto-language; working out the internal dynamics of a people's key political institutions, indicating the mechanisms for their expansion<sup>11</sup> or for the spread of certain political institution;<sup>12</sup> and so forth. These procedures have often relied on oral data, but the most productive source, especially for the relatively recent past, has been the people's oral recall of their own past.

Storing information in memory, and transmitting it across generations, can scarcely be effortless operations. The reason for making this effort usually lies in the uses to which the information can be put; that is, the effort to memorize is likely only for such information as serves interests deemed important by those who do the memorizing—or by their sponsors. This stream of memories, this oral tradition, serves to legitimize the vesting of certain rights; the oral tradition is sustained because it, in turn, sustains important rights in relation to significant interests. The oral tradition, in short, serves as a charter of rights.

One can expect genealogies to be remembered, accurately and in depth, if one's land rights are tied closely to one's place in a lineage, and among the Tiv of Northern Nigeria this recall goes twelve generations back. The recall is utilitarian, however, and only those branches of the lineage are remembered that continue to have members down to the present;<sup>13</sup> and what is recalled today reflects the *contemporary* distribution of land rights. The genealogy shared by a kin group is likely to be continually re-edited, to accommodate the changing demographic realities; it would not coincide completely with the sort of genealogical net required by a Tom Kessinger.

Oral tradition has been especially rich in the numerous African kingdoms where specialist court chroniclers were charged with remembering, reciting when necessary, and transmitting the dynastic chronicles. These chronicles would link the reigning monarch back with the founder of his dynasty—and go beyond to the founder's antecedents. These were no mere lists of kings; each ruler was recalled with rich detail of the major incidents during his reign. As for other sources of historical data, this one too was subject to bias and error. External checks over this bias have been available, however, in the dynastic chronicles of neighbouring kingdom and, occa-

<sup>11</sup> Marshall D. Sahlins, "The segmentary lineage: an organization of predatory expansion", *American Anthropologist*, 1961, vol. 63, pp. 322-45.

<sup>12</sup> Aidan Southall, *Alur Society*, Cambridge, 1953 (?).

<sup>13</sup> The "present" here is the "ethnographic present"; the time of the ethnographer's field-work; if he reports on the society as it was upon initial colonial contact, it refers to that time.



sionally, in archaeology or European records: and Jan Vansina<sup>14</sup> has worked out the epistemology for internal checks on data in the oral tradition.

The most complex state system in subsaharan Africa, at the time of European contact in mid-19th century, was located, approximately, within and adjoining the territory of contemporary Uganda: the largest of its states —Buganda— is estimated to have had a million people, and it had recently been expanding. Building upon a substantial body of research, Roland Oliver has recounted the course of events in this region, beginning ca. 1500 A.D., depending almost entirely on the oral traditions elicited from the court chroniclers in each of the states of the region.<sup>15</sup>

#### INTERPRETING THE RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

Granting the importance of the oral tradition for non-literate societies, what does the Indian historian have to do with it? It is simply that eliciting, appraising, and interpreting the oral tradition is becoming a common dimension of the historian's craft, and it finds applications within India too, despite her literate traditions. Among these is oral history, that is the *generation of* contemporary records, drawing in evidence from individuals whose perspectives on the shaping of key events may be crucial but who would not, on their own, leave accounts for the future historian. Historical fieldwork should, therefore, appeal especially to those who are curious about the grassroot processes in modern Indian history. Oral tradition may also help in enquiries such as that on Chhota Nagpur mentioned earlier. More generally, however, familiarity with this approach is likely to direct attention to hitherto neglected, perhaps believed to be unmanageable, veins of data. The work of Professors McLeod and Thapar, discussed below, illustrates this potential.

Recovery of historical data from the oral tradition, we have argued, rests on the proposition that facts, interacting with interests, are likely to lead to variant accounts. Put another way, given variant accounts of a set of events, each account is likely to have characteristic biases, reflecting particular interests. If the interests, and the related biases, can be peeled off, the kernel of facts will be revealed. It is on this premise that W. H. McLeod has built his biography of the founder of Sikhism, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*.<sup>16</sup>

In ascertaining the facts of Nanak's life, McLeod's problem was that

<sup>14</sup> *Oral Tradition*, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Roland Oliver, "Discernible developments in the interior c. 1500-1840", in *History of East Africa* (Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew, eds.), Vol. 1, Oxford, 1963. See also Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannas*, Madison, 1966.

<sup>16</sup> Oxford, 1968.

the established 15th and 16th century sources took very little notice of the man and his activities. *Adi Granth*, the sacred text compiled a few decades after Nanak's death, incorporates many of his religious compositions which had been preserved among his disciples, but this material is largely silent on his own life and experiences. The Sikh tradition has, however, long employed events, real or presumed, in Nanak's life as vehicles for religious discourse, and a string of such incidents centring on Nanak is known as a *janamsakhi*, "evidences of his life".<sup>17</sup> Compiled by devotees, decades or generations after Nanak's death, the *janamsakhis*, addressed to sectarian edification, carry large accretions of myth and legend, born in the devout imagination of the faithful. Furthermore, even for the most concrete of events, the four distinguishable *janamsakhis* give variant, sometimes conflicting accounts, though some, compiled earlier, are rather more reliable than others.

To this seemingly chaotic situation McLeod brings order by setting out the four *janamsakhis* in detail; developing an epistemology to establish the likely facts of the case; isolating the most probable events—and their sequences; and putting these into an integrated account. Very briefly, McLeod discards "the miraculous or plainly fantastic" material, uses the limited evidence of external sources (including *Adi Granth*) as a check upon the *janamsakhi* accounts, evaluates the measure of agreement between the several *janamsakhis*—especially in view of their differential reliability, and so forth. The skeleton of a biography that this procedure yields, along with an analysis of Nanak's teachings, enables McLeod to write an account of the "historic Nanak".

McLeod, thus, has taken the *janamsakhis*, treated them as a kind of oral tradition and uncovered what appear to be the facts of Nanak's life after the variations have been peeled off. It is possible, however, to focus on the variations in their own right. If source accounts have variant emphases, these emphases may be shown to flow from variant interests. A demonstration of the existence of such an orderly relationship between interest and emphasis would mark a scholarly advance.

Professor Romila Thapar is currently engaged in showing the orderliness of the variation between numerous versions of the epics and the puranic literature in the ancient Indian religious traditions. Committed to writing a very long time ago, successive redacteurs have re-worked these texts again and again, producing variant accounts in a manner reminiscent of the oral tradition of other peoples. Early drafts of Thapar's work show that the variation in the accounts was a function (1) of the changes the society was undergoing when particular accounts were written and (2) of the changing interests of the redacteurs and of their patrons. Related to the foregoing,

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 18n.

and illustrating the method, is Professor Thapar's paper in this volume: the contemporary sociological understanding of the place of symbol, myth, and tradition in social relations is here used for analysing and interpreting the origin of myths in the *itihasa-purana* and the Buddhist traditions.

This essay has explored a small part of the extensive borderlands shared between history, sociology, and social anthropology. I began with the use of oral data in supplementing written records for work on community history, an effort which yields a study in social change simultaneously. The historians of pre-colonial Africa have often had to rely upon oral sources more or less exclusively. Recent trends suggest furthermore that insight and method germinating in work on oral traditions can also bring order to and garner data from the copious texts of India's religious literature.

# Utilisation of Social and Cultural Anthropology in Historical Research : The Case of the Impact of Agriculture on Some South Indian Societies

D. BOSE

THERE is an ancient Indian literary tradition that previous to agriculture the method of obtaining food was by collection, and that the harmonious life of primitive food-gatherers was destroyed by the discovery of agriculture; and that introduction of agriculture was accompanied by '*varnashrama samaja*' (caste society), as well as by the institution of state and government. These topics form a part of larger works in literature, ethics, religion or philosophy. What is of interest, however, is the uniformity of utterances on these subjects in a variety of books, ranging from the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas to the Pali Canons and the Jain scriptures. This uniformity seems to indicate a definite social tradition as to how society was changed by the introduction of agriculture. Thus, for instance, the Vayu Purana,<sup>1</sup> Mahavastu<sup>2</sup> and Padam Carita<sup>3</sup> state that the earliest method of obtaining food was by collection. The Vayu Purana<sup>4</sup> and the Buddhist Mahavastu<sup>5</sup> affirm that in this age—the Krita Yuga—there were no 'varnas' or classes and castes. The Vayu Purana<sup>6</sup> and the Mahavastu<sup>7</sup> say that the harmonious life of primitive food-gatherers was destroyed by the introduction of agriculture. The Vayu Purana says that people then began to take by force and violence rivers, fields, hills, trees, shrubs and plants,<sup>8</sup> just as in more recent times powerful kin groups of Khans and Maliks in the Peshawar valley have forcibly appropriated the lands of the Mohmand community and stopped the traditional exchange of plots embodied in the institution of 'vesh'.<sup>9</sup>

These conclusions of ancient writers on social changes brought about by the development of agriculture are confirmed by the findings of contem-

porary Indian anthropology.<sup>10</sup> In a book entitled "Problems of Indian Society"<sup>11</sup> I showed how such conclusions were supported by contemporary studies of the north and north-western areas of the Indian sub-continent. In this paper I would like to show that they are also supported by studies of some more or less contemporary societies in central and south India. In doing this, I hope to give an example of how historians can make use of the findings of anthropological research.

Societies in the Indian sub-continent are marked by uneven development. The present of some can be seen as the past of others. Thus, the Pathans of Swat, the former Gandhari, now known as the Yusufzai, have a four-estate system of social organization—Khan, Pir, Pathan and the subjugated population—which corresponds to the Kshatriya, Brahman, Vaisya and Sudra of the Rig Veda. This uneven development is a fact which historians and anthropologists can make use of. More specifically the following appear to be some of the areas in which historians can utilise the findings of contemporary anthropology and sociology:

- (1) To substantiate reconstructions of the past made by archaeologists and historians. Thus H. D. Sankalia<sup>12</sup> provides us with a chronological chart of the development of material culture and associated social structures of South India. How do studies of different societies of varying levels of complexity in South India today agree with such a reconstruction of past social structures?
- (2) To fill in gaps in such reconstructions by citing plausible data from studies of contemporary societies which possess social systems somewhat similar to the historical ones being studied.
- (3) Where necessary, to attempt to explain certain historical changes by examining similar changes in present-day societies and by investigating whether the latter could shed light on the former or not.
- (4) To suggest problem areas for further historical investigation such as, for instance, the degree of labour specialisation, the mobility of labour, the types of associations formed by various specialists, and the degree of commodity production and trade in the Tamilnadu of the *Sangam* literature, where merchants could become socially important enough to have epics depicting them as heroes.

It is to such uses of anthropological studies by historians that I propose to pay brief attention in this study of South India. In discussing the impact of agriculture on societies we shall describe both the immediate and the secondary or derived effects.

H. D. Sankalia has given the following chronological chart of the beginnings of civilization in South India. Social systems, much of ritual,

ideas and values perish with time and cannot be discovered by the archaeologist's spade. Understandably there is a minimum mention of such items in the chart. Any attempt, however, to reconstruct past societies with relics of material culture inevitably involves the use of some kind of social model or other. As this is unavoidable, the best we can do, under the circumstances, is to find models from later or contemporary studies, which have a higher degree of probability.

As elsewhere, the data I quote pertain generally to the early twentieth or the late nineteenth century.

Of different social formations in Central and South India the simplest is to be found among communities like the Chenchus<sup>13</sup> and the Kaders.<sup>14</sup> Let us take the Chenchus. Until recently they used to collect forest produce, including wild oats, honey and hunt small animals. The collected food was divided within the group. Food collection can support only small groups—at most 9 or 10 nuclear families, and it requires a rather large gathering area. In the dry hot season, when forest products become scarcer, the groups split into smaller units. They live in temporary leaf shelters, in caves or in the open. The social unit which consists of a number of nuclear families is generally bound by kinship. Most groups have a headman, whose position is not hereditary and who functions largely as a spokesman. Petty quarrels may be resolved by the mediation of a respected elder, not necessarily by the headman. A serious offence is violation of the exogamous rules of the clan.

Chenchus do not seem to be much influenced by religion. The way of life of the Kaders, who inhabit the more densely forested Anaimalai Hills in Travancore, is rather similar. Kaders have no labour specialisation, nor do they possess superior status social groups. Social equality prevails. The results of food collection are shared within the community.

TABLE: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH INDIA

<i>Period &amp; stage</i>	<i>Imp. site</i>	<i>Man-relics</i>	<i>Man-artifacts</i>	<i>Man-settlements</i>	<i>Gen. human activities</i>
2,200-2,800 yrs before today. Stage VI.	(6) Piklihal (5) Tekkala-kota (4) Sangankal (3) Brahmagiri (2) Sanur (1) Adichanallur cf. B & R Allchin (op. cit) for other import. iron age grave sites (map p. 231).	Skeletal, mainly skulls from Adichanallur & Brahmagiri, proto-Australoid & Mediterranean.	Fine wheel-made pottery, iron implements, gold & copper ornaments, of large under- & over-ground stone burials.	First towns: Isila Pattana Kaveri Pattana & villages on river banks, foothills, castellated hills with rock shelters. Historical kingdoms of Cheras, Pandyas etc.	Irrigated (pond & canal) agriculture. Iron-smelting all over S. India Trade & Com. Earliest Brahmi-like Tamil script & Tamil lit.

## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

<i>Period &amp; stage</i>	<i>Imp. sites</i>	<i>Man-relics</i>	<i>Man-artifacts</i>	<i>Man-settlements</i>	<i>Gen. human activities</i>
2,800-4,000 yrs. before today. <i>Stage V.</i>	(7) Hallur (6) Utnur (5) Piklihal (4) Maski (3) Tekklakota (2) Sangankal (1) Brahmagiri etc.	Skeletal remains of proto-Austr. & Mediter- ranean. Entry of Med. Caucasoids, with pre- Harappan artefacts.	Flat copper axes & pins, thin blade tools, polish- ed stone axes, chisels, adzes. Square or round built houses, lime floor, stone fire-places, storage jars. Gold orna- ments. Pit burials with or without pots.	Settled villages on river banks, foothills & castellated hills with rock shelters. Forest cattle stations (cf. Allchin (op. cit. p. 161).	Collection of semi-wild grasses & cultivation of cereals like 'ragi'... Domestication of animals like ox, cow, pig, goat & horse. Pottery, copper smelting. Trade in precious stones, copper ingots and imple- ments.
4,000- 10,000 yrs. before today. <i>Stage IV.</i>	Sangankal, Teris (Tiru- nelveli Dist.)		Very small tools or microliths, blades, points, scrapers ..	On river banks, foothills, caves & rock shelters.	Intensive food gathering but now with the help of harvesting or cutting tools for naturally growing grasses.
20,000- 30,000 yrs. before today. <i>Stage III.</i>	Vedachialu (Chittoor Dt.)		Thin long flat small stone blades, & chisel points.	River banks, foothills.	Intensive food gathering, but with finer implements than preceding period, like prototypes of present cut- ting, slicing steel knives.
30,000- 40,000 yrs. before today. <i>Stage II.</i>	Giddalur, Attiram- pakkam.		Comparatively light small stone tools, points, awls and scrapers.	Ditto.	Hunting, fish- ing now also with spear. Collecting wild fruits & roots.
50,000- 75,000 yrs. before today. <i>Stage IA.</i>	Giddalur (Kurnool Dt.) Attiram- pakkam (Chingleput Dt.)		Comparatively light, symme- trical stone tools (handaxes & cleavers).	Ditto.	Hunting, fish- ing, collecting wild fruits & roots.
200,000 yrs. before today. <i>Stage I.</i>	Vadamadurai (Chingleput District).		Heavy and crude stone tools (handaxes & choppers).	Ditto.	Hunting & collecting wild fruits & roots etc.

*Source :* The above chart is based on a chart in H. D. Sankalia, "Beginning of Civilization in South India", in the "Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies." ed. R. E. Asher. Madras 1971. International Association of Tamil Research. Vol. 1 pp. 27 seq.

Communities like the Chenchus and Kaders resemble the stone age hunters and collectors of stages II and III in the chart, between 20 to 40,000 years ago, and who used wooden staves, stone-tipped spears and microlith-headed arrows. It is possible that hunting and collecting groups like the Chenchus and Kaders descended from some of these prehistoric hunters and collectors.

We can now examine some agricultural communities, starting with those using the most primitive techniques like digging sticks, and practising slash and burn cultivation. First, a few words are necessary about slash and burn or 'jhum' cultivation. An important feature is the selection of hills with a convenient slope and sufficiently dense vegetation to provide the necessary amount of ash. If the slopes are steep the rains will wash away soil and seeds. Jhum cultivation can be divided into stages. In the simpler or earlier types, the cultivators move from one area to another when the soil is exhausted; e.g., the Hill Reddis of Central India. Here a territory is not staked out as clan territory as among the Marias of Bastar.<sup>15</sup> This staking out of clan territory appears to happen when neighbouring population pressures increase, and it is felt necessary to hold on to fertile lands. In the more densely populated areas stricter control of the 'firing' may be organized such as making fire lanes to prevent flames from spreading out of selected blocks. Neglect may be penalized by fines.<sup>16</sup>

The transition to permanent cultivation in hilly terrain may be marked by a number of stages. The richer soil at the bottom of the valleys is a better prize, provided irrigation and flood control can be ensured to some extent. Permanent cultivation can then start here. At the same time slash and burn is resorted to on the hill slopes in strict rotation with well-enforced responsibility to prevent fires spreading out of selected areas. Conditions permitting, a further step is terracing the hill slopes and arranging for their irrigation, as among the Angami Nagas in Northeast India.

In Central and South India, the Dravidian-speaking Hill Reddis are an example of wandering slash-and-burn cultivators. In this and subsequent examples the communities discussed are Dravidian-speakers.

The Hill Marias of Bastar are an example of further development within the framework of slash-and-burn cultivation. The closely related Bison Horn Marias of the plains mark the transition to permanent, irrigated plough-using agriculture on more level territory, with a continuous decline of subsidiary slash and burn cultivation. This is paralleled by changes in their social institutions and structure as well as in their attitudes and values, as compared to the Hill Marias. They support a number of craftsmen. Their villages are more or less permanent. They are wealthier and their attitudes towards one another more individualistic. Let us first observe those using



the most primitive agricultural techniques—the digging stick and nomadic slash-and-burn cultivation—the Hill Reddis.

### HILL REDDIS

Hill Reddis live in small settlements along the Godavari where it emerges from the Ghats.<sup>17</sup> Their cultivation is found along river banks and in patches of burnt-out hill-side forests. They supplement their agriculture with food gathering. When the soil becomes exhausted they burn down another area of forest and shift their cultivation. This is, of course, feasible as long as virgin forest soil is available. Most Hill Reddis, however, possess hardly any ploughs or cattle, except a group further south, which have used cattle-drawn ploughs for the last four or five generations. The bulk of the Reddis do not even use iron hoes in cultivation. Their main equipment is the digging stick. Haimendorf makes the point that there is a definite advance registered within the framework of slash-and-burn cultivation when cultivators use hoes instead of digging sticks.<sup>18</sup> This results in increased productivity. In this sense the Hill Marias, Bondos and Gadabas are more advanced than the Hill Reddis. The Kolans, who practise slash-and-burn agriculture and use the digging stick, are similar to the Reddis.<sup>19</sup>

In Central and South India the main tribal groups have been identified as Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic (e.g. Santali) speakers. Haimendorf is, however, of the opinion that though the Chenchus and Hill Reddis have picked up a local Telugu dialect, they are descended from and belong to a pre-Austro-Asiatic and pre-Dravidian population, similar to the Stone-age hunters whose relics have been discovered in these areas.<sup>20</sup> The material culture of peoples like the Hill Reddis and Kolans in this respect appears to approximate to Stage IV of the chart, between four to ten thousand years ago.

What does the transition from hunting and collecting to agriculture or food production signify? We have mentioned before that Hill Reddis (and Kolans) also depend on food gathering. "The chase and the collecting of wild jungle produce is still an essential factor in the economic system. Villages are small and of no great permanency, though far less frequently shifted than the settlements of such tribes as the Chenchus . . ."<sup>21</sup> Land and its produce belong to the individuals, who have cleared it as long as they cultivate it, after which it reverts back to the community.

" . . . land is the common property of the village community, and no rigid social organization hampers the personal freedom of the individual, who may join now one and now another community. And in the

field of material culture, the bow and the digging stick are, as of old, the most important implements. Yet besides all these links with the past, there are revolutionizing new developments. Man has broken the chains of his complete dependence on nature and freed himself from the inexorable necessity of spending everyday of his life in the quest for food. The raising of crops secures a comparatively stable basis of diet, and the possession of fields leads to a more settled mode of life which in turn renders possible the construction of solid houses, the acquisition of more substantial household goods, and the domestication of pigs and fowls."<sup>23</sup>

There is practical equality between men and women. Marriage is frequently matrilineal, though descent is, at least nowadays, strictly patrilineal. The atmosphere in the villages is distinctly democratic. There is a village council which may be called for various reasons such as marital cases, incest and violation of ritual—the last two offences being regarded as very serious. Where more than one village is involved joint council meetings may be held. The headman is just a chairman of the village panchayat and is in charge of ritual, but has no power of sanctions.

In this traditional Hill Reddi economy, there was little scope for differentiation in wealth. Energy and hard work could increase a household's food supply, but there existed no medium of exchange like money and no wage labour. Assistance in housebuilding and occasionally in sowing or reaping was based on reciprocity.<sup>24</sup> The results of the hunt were shared, according to the custom of food gatherers, but little interchange of agricultural products took place.<sup>24</sup> The majority of implements used in working the soil and preparing food was manufactured by members of each household. The Hill Reddis had no craftsmen of their own. However, they were surrounded by technically more advanced communities like the plough-using Koyas. The Koyas could produce enough food surpluses to support craftsmen like smiths, who furnished the Reddis with iron implements in exchange for baskets and winnowing fans. The usual medium of exchange used in such of these cases was grain. Thus the smiths of the Kammer community supplied Reddis with iron implements against a customary exchange of twenty four seers of grain per family per year. Here, as amongst the Todas of the Nilgiris, we see the establishment of an arrangement for the regular exchange of specialised products, whose further development leads to the system of exchange of goods and services characteristic of present day *jati* society and often known as the '*jajmani* system'.

The village community is the framework of economic co-operation. Originally it probably consisted of members of an exogamous clan only (but

today includes persons from other clans also) as the custom of marrying into neighbouring villages seems to indicate. The main functions of the clans appear to be the regulation of marriage and the strengthening of the social cohesion of the larger tribal units.

The practice of agriculture among the Hill Reddis has led to a new phenomenon in the sphere of ritual not to be seen among food-gathering Chenchus and Kadirs. It has led to the cult of the Earth Mother and to an enhanced role for the magician priest, whose function among the Hill Reddis has become hereditary.<sup>25</sup> There are no such hereditary functionaries among the hunting Chenchus and Kadirs.

## THE HILL MARIAS OF BASTAR

The Hill Marias are closely related as an ethnic community to the Bison Horn Marias of the plains below. By the 1940's the Bison Horn Marias had, on the whole, gone over to permanent plough-using agriculture.<sup>26</sup> The Hill Marias were then still practising slash-and-burn cultivation, but in contrast to the Hill Reddis they had found it necessary to demarcate a permanent larger area of land within which to rotate this type of cultivation or as they called it 'penda' cultivation. Each clan controlled an area within which permanent villages with attached arable lands were established. The villagers moved into each of these villages in turn when they shifted their cultivation. As neighbouring populations increase, competition for arable lands grows, and the above measures seem to be a response to this competition: the clans take steps to exercise permanent control over a certain tract of territory. Instead of digging sticks, Hill Marias use hoes. In the late 1940's very few of them used ploughs.

Hill Marias have little or no specialisation of labour. They get their iron implements and other craft products from the artisans of neighbouring communities, which include craftsmen attached to the technically more advanced Bison Horn Marias.

Hill Marias have no privileged social groups among themselves. Their society in this sense is very democratic and co-operative.

## THE BISON HORN MARIAS

The Bison Horn Marias,<sup>27</sup> who live in the low land plains near the Hill Marias, cultivate with the help of cattle-drawn ploughs. In many ways they are a contrast to the Hill Marias. Their fields are regularly and permanently cultivated. At the same time a diminishing amount of slash-and-burn cultivation is carried on by them on the hillsides as an auxiliary source of pro-

duce. Their villages and houses are permanent. On the average they are richer than the ethnically similar Hill Marias. The larger surpluses they produce has resulted in the development of a greater sense of private ownership and inheritance of property as well as individualism—all of which are rarer amongst the more collective-minded Hill Marias. These surpluses also enable them to support a number of craft specialists such as:

(A) Blacksmiths, many of whom are of Maria origin and follow similar customs. Investigation of a Maria blacksmith settlement at Bagmundi Panera showed that in every case the smiths had either been cultivators themselves in the past or were sons of cultivators.<sup>28</sup> As amongst other primitive communities the smith is looked on as one possessing magical powers and is to that extent taboo and to be avoided.

(B) Brass workers, who unlike the blacksmiths, have separated enough from others to have practically formed a distinct caste, called Gharwe. They are similar in appearance to the Marias and are probably of the same stock.<sup>29</sup>

(C) Bison Horn Marias have no potters of their own, but go to the usual Hindu Kumhar caste of potters.<sup>30</sup>

(D) A menial caste of weavers, called Mahras, supply cloth to the Marias.<sup>31</sup> This may be the beginning of a system of exploiting untouchable labour by the Maria village community, a system recorded more fully in the case of the Kondhs of Orissa and Ganjam, which we shall discuss later on.

An enquiry in 1927 revealed that, though deprived of many administrative, political and judicial functions, the Bison Horn Maria hierarchical system of councils—village, group of villages and higher level—extensively regulated the social and religious life of the community. On the village level it consisted of a panchayat of elders, which sent the hereditary village headmen to represent them on the next higher level—the '*patti*' or group of headmen representing from 50 to 100 villages. Representatives called '*sendhias*' were sent from pattis to the supreme council or Council of Sendhias.<sup>32</sup>

Grigson wrote in the late 1940's that "the natural democratic tendencies of the tribe . . . block any attempt on the part of a village or pargana headman to become a despot."<sup>33</sup> The seeds of such despotism, however, may be present in the ranks of the hereditary headman and their families, if as a result of economic differentiation now possible among the Bison Horn Marias, the power of wealth begins to coincide with political authority. We shall see that this had been the case with the Raj Gonds of Adilabad among

whom an aristocracy, government and monarchy had developed by the 18th century.

### THE KONDHS

The Kondhs<sup>34</sup> of Orissa and the Ganjam district of Andhra Pradesh are in some respects similar to the Bison Horn Marias. They belong to the same group of Gondispeaking peoples of Central and South India. They have also taken to cattledrawn plough agriculture. Their clans are divided into sub-clans of common descent called "*muthas*". *Muthas* occupy a definite territory containing villages and hamlets. This territory was defended by them against outside encroachment. The right of the individual Kondh to cultivate a piece of land he has cleared, is derived from his *mutha* membership. At the end of the 19th century (to which period the data cited here belong), cultivable land was available, and separate families settled on land they had cleared.

Among the Kondhs the head of each family owns the homestead and all the land attached to it, but his sons continue to live with him in his house, even after marriage, sharing in family meals. The father's property is divided equally among the sons on his death. The daughters receive no share. Residence is also patrilocal. The eldest of the village headmen succeeds him to the post. He belongs to the seniormost lineage of the village, and the headman is an important social link between the separate village families.

Kondh agriculture is generally regular and permanent, and is carried on with the help of cattle-drawn ploughs. From the surplus food supply so obtained Kondh villages can support a collection of hereditary craft and service castes (smiths, potters etc.) as well as hereditary menial labourers, who are all regarded as being attached to the village. Some of them have apparently come from the economically more developed Oriya areas, a kind of absorption of specialists, which can be seen among some Pathan tribes of the non-administered territories also. Whatever their origins, Kondh villages are stratified between Kondh cultivators on the one hand and the untouchable menials on the other hand. This can happen when the technology has advanced to the extent that production by menials, untouchables or serfs can also support persons other than themselves. Kondh cultivators do not intermarry either with the craft or service specialists or untouchable labourers, the occupations of all of whom are now hereditary, and who tend to be endogamous. Thus Kondh villages are beginning to acquire features of caste society. The barrier of untouchability between Kondhs and untouchable labourers can be called the first level of stratification in the village. This is a feature, which belongs to the general run of Indian villages, where

systematic plough agriculture has been established. However, the second level of stratification found in many other settled Indian villages between a land-controlling aristocracy and the peasants, craftsmen and service specialists is not exhibited in full by Kondh society even at the end of the 19th century. Among the Kondhs each village has its chief, who is the head of the eldest family in the village, and the position is hereditary. The *mutha* territory, in some districts called the '*nadu*', as in Tamil areas, has its chief called the '*abaya*'. The hereditary *abaya* comes from the seniormost lineage in the *mutha* territory. Joint village meetings can take place under the presidency of the *abaya*. Each *mutha* also has a priest of the Damna clan for the whole territory, an arrangement similar to that of the Baigas. Here priesthood has become hereditary and is restricted to a clan.<sup>35</sup> The formation of a hereditary priest caste is just the next step. In the same way, as we saw among the Bison Horn Marias, the hereditary village and *mutha* chiefs could become a superior class or an aristocracy, provided they could combine superior economic power and political authority, perhaps by extracting privileges for their families through their position as chiefs.

#### THE RAJ GONDS OF ADILABAD

The material culture achieved by the Raj Gonds of Adilabad, as observed in the early 20th century,<sup>36</sup> was considerably superior to those of the Hill Reddis and Hill Maria Gonds. Apparently it was on a level equal to that of the Maratha and Telugu Hindu peasants by the end of the 17th century. Cattle-drawn ploughs were used in cultivation. The available agricultural surpluses maintained a variety of specialists, e.g:

(A) Blacksmiths called *Khatis* who worked for a number of villages to which they travelled with their equipment. Their status among the Raj Gonds was fairly good, expressed by the fact that they could enter Gond Houses. There were also Gond smiths.<sup>37</sup>

(B) Brass workers or *Otaris* or *Wojaris*, who also travelled to neighbouring villages like the *Khatis* with their equipment, and had a similar status. They did not eat food cooked by the Gonds. Like the *Khatis* they formed a caste-like group and were not a part of the clan organizations of the Gonds.

(C) An interesting group closely attached to the Gonds, particularly to the Raj Gond aristocracy, were the *Pradhan* bards. Like the *Charans* of the Rajput nobility they were not only bards, chronicling the history of their patrons, but also genealogists. Rajput influence may be detected here. They apparently came from outside Raj Gond

society, and this is also attested by their physical appearance. As with the other specialists in general, their occupation is hereditary, and they are endogamous.

Not only has Raj Gond society developed caste-like organizations, which approximate to *jati* society, it has also evolved a hereditary aristocracy, kingship and, prior to the Maratha conquest in the 18th century, government. In short, by the 17th century the Gonds had emerged as a peasant society similar to that of the Telugus, Tamils and Karnatakis in essential respects. They could no longer be called tribal.

The former Gond rulers or Chandu Rajas, as they were called, exercised a certain amount of authority right up to the 20th century. They belong to a single clan—the Atram—and were superior in rank to local Gond chiefs, drawn from other clans like the Utmur, titled '*deshmukhs*' in Maratha fashion. These Gond aristocrats sat on superior councils, which passed judgment on cases sent up to them by village councils.

Of interest is the fact that in the days of their independent rule, prior to the Maratha conquest, Gond rajas kept Brahmans at their court, as distinct from any indigenous priests. Such Brahmans not only performed ritual functions but also helped in administrative matters. This is an example of what probably happened further back in history in Andhra, Tamilnadu and Karnataka, which resulted in a considerable degree of Brahmanisation of not only the rulers, but also of large sections of the population. We shall see this later.

In surveying the above Gondi-speaking communities it will be seen that, in the case of the Hill Marias (as well as for the non-Gondi Reddis), the superior strength of their neighbouring communities have confined them to the less fertile highlands. These conditions probably were important factors, which restricted them to a more backward technology. When we compare the Hill Marias and the ethnically similar Bison Horn Marias the striking cultural and social differences between them are apparent. These differences are accompanied by differences in agricultural technologies—the latter using cattle-drawn ploughs and the former confining themselves to hoes; the latter practising permanent irrigated agriculture, whilst the former goes in for slash-and-burn cultivation. We saw that their success in producing greater agricultural surpluses in sufficient amounts led to a number of social and cultural changes. The same could be said of another Gondi-speaking group—the Kondhs of Orissa and Ganjam. Finally there was the example of the even more technically advanced Raj Gonds of Adilabad, whose social and cultural development was on a par with the Maratha and Telugu peasant societies.

## A CONTEMPORARY MYSORE VILLAGE

With the growth of a systematic, irrigated, plough agriculture, stratification within the village and labour specialisation increases and assumes more rigid organizational forms. Occupations generally become hereditary, and marriage takes place within the caste. We thus see the emergence of the *jati* system, the typical product of conditions both in North and South India. Such a village is Rampura in Mysore State which M. N. Srinivas studied.<sup>38</sup> Here the peasant caste Okkaligas (735 persons in all) own substantial agricultural land and, as a whole, stand out as a dominant group, though some are more opulent than the others, such as the village headman and the caste headman—both Okkaligas. The village is both divided along property-owning lines and is also an interdependent unit. Grouped around the Okkaligas are the various craft and service castes of hereditary Potters, Weavers, Oilmen, Barbers, Fishermen and so on. Each caste has also its own caste organization and life. It is very probable that the Okkaliga peasant caste emerged from a cultivating semi-tribal peasantry like the Konds. Occupying the land and cultivating it like similar South Indian peasant castes, such as the Gaudas and the Vellalas, the Okkaligas supported and maintained craft service groups and priests, and commandeered the labour of untouchable castes like the Holeyas. The economy of the village operates largely through a system of traditionally fixed exchanges of goods and services in kind, though a certain amount of production for the open market also takes place. The former, for convenience, is known as the 'jajmani' system.

There is one interesting feature of villages like Rampura, which is not found among simpler societies like those of the Hill Reddis and Marias—the existence of hereditary commercial castes like the Banajigas. Their existence points to a dual feature in such peasant societies: the existence side by side of the jajmani system and an open market where money is used. As the Sangam literature indicates, the open market came to be connected with other open markets, including that of the towns. Commodities were increasingly produced for such open markets and it is from this buying and selling that the specialised function of the trader arose.<sup>39</sup> Further historical research would be interesting.

This spreading network of trade has apparent implications. In a tribe the individual identifies himself by his tribe and descent group. In a caste society the individual identifies himself by his occupation and caste, and much less by his descent group. Another differential in caste society is identification by linguistic grouping. For instance in the mixed language Deccan village of Shamirpet marriages between occupationally similar but linguistically different castes—Marathi and Telugu—do not take place.<sup>40</sup> Ties



between villages and towns strengthened by trade and sometimes common administration could reinforce this sense of folk unity inherited from a common language tribal past, while all the time the role of kinship as a basis for social organization continuously declines. The Sangam literature describes the different geographical regions of the Tamil country with their specific flora, fauna and occupational groups of people.<sup>41</sup> The formation of such language-culture groups is a feature of post-tribal 'organic' society. Thus the sense of Pathan national consciousness has emerged in areas like the Peshawar valley, where the tribal organization of various Pathan communities have broken down as they settled into permanent agriculture. The main such linguistic cultural groups in South India today are the Tamils, Telugus, Karnatakis and Malayalese. As early as the Mahabharata various linguistic groups were identified. This is also an area of interest for research.

Fairly early in South Indian history a division took place between the so-called Right Hand and Left Hand groupings of castes. These divisions do not exist in largely matrilineal Kerala nor in North India. Among various theories, Hutton thinks that this division arose when some castes—the Right Hand—refused to switch from a more or less matrilineal form of inheritance to a patrilineal form adopted by the Left Hand faction.<sup>42</sup> The fact that in matrilineal Kerala, with one or two exceptions, there is no such division reinforces such a theory. Again the women of some Left Hand castes, who prefer the matrilineal mode, are classed as Right Hand differing in the same way as the Jat women who refuse to accept the male advocacy of the principle of the levirate, in North India. On the other hand no women of the Right Hand group belong to the Left Hand faction. The resistance of the women to the patrilineal mode here seems to stand out quite clearly. It also seems of some significance that the Right Hand castes are generally connected with agriculture whereas all the artisan castes belong to the Left Hand group, in addition to the merchants. In the matrilineal communities of Kerala, like the Nairs, property descends from mother to daughters, and the son is the manager of the '*taravad*' or household. The impact of the modern economy, however, based on private initiative and enterprise in jobs or in business is changing the matrilineal family to a bilateral one in Kerala. Modern legislation permits the husband's son instead of his sister's son to become his heir. The Left Hand castes, in the main, belong to groups interested in commodity production and trade. The men engaged in such professions would have property in more than just the form of landed property. Their jobs would also demand more mobility. It would be natural for them to demand that property they had acquired should be handed down intact as capital to their male heirs, and not be split up between sons and daughters, or given only to daughters, who would not follow the same professions. Such a situation would in some

respects parallel the present one in Kerala, both of them arising out of what may be described as the growth of private enterprise. The continued existence of certain types of marriages in South India such as uncle-niece or matrilinear cross-cousin marriage strengthen the idea that matrilineal aspects of kinship organization were stronger in the past than now. Many Brahmans, a large number of whom descended from North Indian migrants, do not belong to these factions. If the above account of the defection of the Left Hand castes is more or less correct, this would be further evidence of the local genesis of South Indian caste structures. Some of them are strongly matrilineal, and they perhaps antedate the arrival of Brahmanism in the early years of the Christian era. Brahmans have shown a tendency to adapt themselves to local customs. In Maharashtra and the Dravidian-speaking South, they have adopted local forms of marriage. In Kerala, where matrilineal forms of social organization were stronger, the Nambudri Brahmans have retained the North Indian patrilineal traditions of marriage only with respect to the marriage of the eldest son. Elsewhere in South India they have retained patrilineal forms, which may indicate that any change from matrilineal to patrilineal systems could have taken place before their large-scale arrival in South India. For historians the persistence of matrilineal marriage and matrilineal descent in Kerala could be an interesting problem.

The conflict between the Right Hand and Left Hand groups appears to be more complex than issues of descent, inheritance and ritual. These divisions also appear under different names, and their caste composition naturally is varied according to locality and time. In Rampur village, the division is between the *Nadu* and the *Desha* divisions.<sup>43</sup> The main prop of the *Nadu* division, which Srinivas equates with the Right Hand, are the numerous peasant Okkaliga caste. However, castes, which frequently have the suffix '*Shetti*' (Sanskrit '*Sresthi*' i.e. 'Trader') belong to the *Desha* division e.g. the Banajiga traders, Washermen, Potters, Barbers, Fishermen, Weavers, Basketmakers, Swineherds and Smiths—all who have a bigger stake in commodity production and who come up against powerful landed interests and their allies. Violent clashes between the two groups have often occurred now and in the past, just as scattered references in inscriptions relating to the Chola period (c. 900—c. 1400 A.D.) speak of conflicts between peasants and the land-controlling Idangai group of castes as well as temple authorities.<sup>44</sup> Such conflicts appear to be an integral part of emergent caste society.

#### THE SPREAD OF BRAHMANICAL CULTURE

Brahmanical culture pervades Central and South India. A good example of the Brahmanisation of a ruling group, and thence of large sections of

society is given by the Coorgs of Mysore.<sup>45</sup> The Coorgs were an aristocracy under the Lingavat Rajas, landlords monopolising the civil and military administration. They had their own ritual and priests known as Amma Coorgs. They had non-Brahmanical customs such as burying their dead, eating pork and remarrying widows. Of late the Coorgs have been calling themselves Kshatriyas, though their practices differ widely in some respects from the Brahmanical Kshatriyas of North India. In the early 19th century they began to contact and favour Brahmans increasingly. A section of their own priests—the Amma Coorgs—then decided to become disciples of the Brahman monastery at Ramchandrapura in Mysore. In 1834 at Belmuri, on the banks of the Kaveri, they donned the sacred thread and became Brahmans. In Tamilnadu the gotra names of some Brahman priests are the same or are close adaptations of names of priestly lineages of non-Brahman priests mentioned in the Sangam literature.<sup>46</sup> This is one of the ways the ranks of the Brahmans have been augmented, and is one of the reasons for their endogamous sub-divisions. The Coorgs were now technically Brahmanised Hindus.

The above example illustrates the co-operation existing between secular dominant groups and castes and the Brahmans. We saw the beginnings of such co-operation among the Raj Gonds. On the other hand there also exists a conflict of interests between them which centres mainly around the control of political, social and economic resources—particularly land. In medieval North India the Brahmans generally did not possess much land. An examination of Abul Fazl's 'Ain' shows that of the listed zamindar families in the districts of the U.P. and Bihar not more than approximately 10% were Brahmans. The dominant secular castes ostentatiously proclaim the supreme status of such poor Brahmans, who set an example of simple living and high thinking. It is not the wealthy land-controllers, but the Brahmans who should be models for society to follow. Do not the zamindars, jagirdars, rajas and ranas follow the laws of Karma and Dharma and aspire to be born in their next lives as Brahmans, and thence to achieve liberation? These concepts are one of the props of Brahmanical Hinduism.

A recent survey of Tanjore District in Tamilnadu,<sup>47</sup> however, shows that one out of three villages had Brahman landlords, who also dominated the political and social life of these villages, as for instance, in Thyagasa-muthirani village and Kumbapettai. When the local dominant aristocracy or caste begins to make large donations of land and property to Brahmans and temples, it strengthens the secular power of the latter, and weakens its own relative position. It would hesitate, one would think, to do this except under imperative political considerations, such as the declining hold of existing ritual and administration. Further surrender of property to Brahmans

by Coorgs could lead to the former becoming not only ritually but also secularly dominant. This is what happened in large parts of South India. But this combination of temporal and religious authority in Brahman hands knocks out one of the props of Brahmanical Hinduism. His model, i.e., of simple living and high thinking is regarded as a sham. Frequent attacks on temples and breaking of images as well as attacks on Brahmanism as such under the leadership of bodies like the DMK in recent times testify to this.

Thyagasamuthiram village (TM for short) and Kumbapettai in Tanjore are examples of this Brahman dominance. In TM and Kumbapettai dominant Brahman landlords have 'mirasi' holdings, a Persian title, but a practice which goes back to Chola times.<sup>48</sup> Here land is held hereditarily by an individual family, provided it pays the tax to the state. The holders can sublease the land or employ labourers to work it. An examination of Brahman or Brahmadeya villages of the Chola period shows numbers of such villages in every administrative unit of the Chola empire.<sup>49</sup> Karashima finds two or three Brahmadeya villages on an average in every 'nadu' or sub-district. Huge grants in addition were made to temples. Thus Rajaraja I gave the Tanjore temple 35 villages with 1000 acres; 5 with between 500—1000; 3 with 200 to 300 acres; and 6 with 50 to 100 acres.<sup>50</sup>

These Brahmadeya villages and temples also possessed considerable political and administrative powers and worked in close co-operation with royal officials. Non-Brahman villages were called 'ur' and were often dominated by overlords belonging to the Idangai group of castes. Village assemblies apparently elected representatives to area or 'nadu' councils to participate with the government in nadu administration. Such assemblies are reminiscent of tribal councils formed by clan representatives to administer the larger tribal area, as among the Kondhs, and may have been derived from such institutions. Popular representation in such councils may not have seen eye to eye with royal policies. Brahmins also served in these councils, and could possibly have served as a counterweight to the commoners.

The caste order, whose survivals are seen today in TM or Kumbapettai, was apparently consolidated during Chola times. It consists basically of endogamous, hereditary occupational castes, dominant land-controlling castes and untouchable helots, ranked in a ritual hierarchy in which the Brahman is supreme. This order is similar to the '*jati*' system of North India, both apparently being the products of similar conditions including their technologies. In both the persistence of the *jajmani* system of distribution has acted as an obstacle to mobility of labour, competition, capital accumulation and private enterprise. The stages in the path to medieval *jati* society in the South Indian example are seen to be the following: 'There is no labour specialisation or stratification among food gatherers like the Chenchus and the

Kadirs or among those engaged in the lower stages of agricultural production like the Hill Reddis and Marias. Their food surpluses are too small to maintain such populations. Both the Chenchus and Kadirs are surrounded by iron-working peasant societies, from whom they can get iron implements. In other respects their societies resemble those of the stone age gatherers of Sankalia's Stage II and more probably Stage III who lived between 20 to 30 thousand years ago. The latter like the Chenchus also inhabited riverbanks, foothills and caves, probably as small kin groups dividing their collection among themselves, and without labour specialists or a superior strata.

With the growth of labour productivity in agriculture as among the Konds and Bison Hora Marias, craft specialists are maintained and the labour of untouchables is utilised. The use of such subject labour can be termed the first level of stratification in Indian villages. In the chart the beginnings of agriculture are placed in Stage IV when we get the first evidence of harvesting tools which could have been used for cutting both natural grasses or cultivated ones. The cultivation was probably with the use of digging sticks. Such developments could have taken place between 4 to 10 thousand years ago. Nomadic slash-and-burn cultivation may have started. The most similar contemporary society would be that of the Hill Reddis which is non-specialised and unstratified. Like the Hill Reddis the pre-historic groups also did not have permanent dwelling sites. In Stage V of the chart the evidence of systematic settled agriculture with the domestication of animals like the ox, cow, pig, sheep and horse accumulates. The period ranges between 2800 to 4000 years ago. A West Asian, Mediterranean type population enters the scene, perhaps the precursors of many present-day Dravidian speakers, in addition to the older Vedddoid populations. Many of their material artefacts resemble those of certain pre-Harappan cultures of N. W. India.<sup>21</sup> Numerous jars indicate storage perhaps of cereals. Settled villages on river banks indicate more permanent residence and permanent agriculture. What look like terraced hillsides may denote a transition from jhum cultivation. Enough food surpluses are obtained to support at least two kinds of specialists—copper smiths and potters. Flat copper axes and pins are used side by side with stone implements. Such populations could be compared with a contemporary community like the Konds. If so, it is possible that like them they used semi-serf or semi-slave labour, and some of them had the beginnings of an aristocracy like the Raj Gonds.

Agricultural productivity and the material culture of the Raj Gond peasants resemble those of the Telugu or Maratha peasants. Higher food surpluses have led to the creation of an aristocracy, kingship and a state as well as the support of an organized priesthood. Stage VI of the chart marks the stage of peasant societies dominated by elements of similar landed

peasant castes like the Vellalas, Kammas, and Okkaligas, possessing the familiar features of caste society, with its writing and calendars—the stage of civilisation and written history.

Developments in North India from undifferentiated tribal systems to *jati* society has been rather similar to that in the South and the Central regions. In a book, "Problems of Indian Society"<sup>22</sup> I showed that the Pathans of the Frontier are mentioned in the Rig Veda as the Pakhta, a people who fought in the Battle of the Ten Kings, a name similar to present-day Pakhtun; Queen Gandhari of Hastinapura belonged to the Gandhari people around Kandahar, now, after conversion to Islam, known as the Yusufzai in Swat or ancient Suvastu; that names like Afridi, Dadi (Darada), Khattak (Kshattak) mentioned by Greek historians still persist as names of communities. Such evidence shows that they were related to the Vedic Aryans, but many of them have remained in their former tribal or semi-tribal stage, whilst their kindred communities have changed. Among some of them social changes have been recently taking place, which resemble changes observed in Vedic and post-Vedic literature. Thus the Masuds of Waziristan are semi-nomadic, pastoral, have no labour specialists of their own and no stratification. Pathans of the Peshwar and Swat valleys, however, who have settled down to permanent systematic agriculture have developed an increasing range of specialists, some of whom are tending to become endogamous groups; have an aristocracy of Khans and Maliks, who are the social equals of priestly Pirs, but otherwise practise hypergamy; cultivating Pathan peasantry superior to a subject population. If one reads Brahman for Pir, Kshatriya for Khan, Vaisya for Pathan and Sudra for the subject populations the parallel with the Vedic four-estate system is close. West Punjab in the 19th century was dominated by similar communities such as the Ghakkars, Janjuas, Awans, Jats etc. which had been similarly differentiated. When however, we come to the fertile riverine plains of East Punjab and Haryana the social picture changes. Here we get a far larger number and variety of specialists in non-agricultural occupations and the concentration of the mercantile elements of undivided Punjab. Greater productivity and fertility of the soil have permitted this. Occupations have become hereditary and marriage is within the occupational group or *jati*. One of the reasons for the growth of such *jatis* is probably the attempt to control competition within the ranks of each specialist occupation. This transition from the four-estate to the *jati* system between the Frontier and Haryana is paralleled by a similar record in history, from the Rig Vedic system to the *jati* system depicted by Manu and probably based on the one existing at his time in Haryana.

Similarities in development in both North and South India have result-

ed in rather similar experiences and cultural evaluation of these experiences. Combined with the diffusion of cultural items, including Brahmanical culture, across the sub-continent, these experiences appear to be the profound roots of the unity of the peoples of these lands.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Vayu Purana I. viii. 84.
- <sup>2</sup> Mahavastu I. 340-1.
- <sup>3</sup> Padam Carita III. 55.
- <sup>4</sup> Vayu Purana I. viii. 60.
- <sup>5</sup> Mahavastu I. 340-6.
- <sup>6</sup> Vayu Purana I. viii. 128, 142-5, 154.
- <sup>7</sup> Mahavastu I. 347-8.
- <sup>8</sup> Vayu Purana, I. viii. 31. According to the Atharva Veda (viii.10.24) agriculture was discovered by Prthu Vainya, a mythical culture hero, described also as the lord of both worlds, of men and animals (Pancavimsa Brahmana xiii.5.19).
- <sup>9</sup> ROSE, H. "Glossary of Tribes and Castes in the Punjab and N.W.F.P." Lahore 1911, Civil and Military Gazette Press.
- <sup>10</sup> BARTH F. "Political Leadership among Swat Pathans", London 1959. The Athlone Press.
- <sup>11</sup> Peshwar Settlement Report. Introduction xiv-xvi.
- <sup>12</sup> IBBITSON, D. "Report on the Punjab Census of 1881". Lahore, Punjab, 1882. Supdt. of Govt. Printing.
- <sup>13</sup> These conclusions, for instance, are affirmed in a survey of several hundred pre-literate societies of today by Hobhouse, Wheeler and Ginsberg in "The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler Peoples". London 1930. Chapman and Hall.
- <sup>14</sup> BOSI, D. "Problems of Indian Society". Bombay 1968. Popular Prakashan. Chs 4 to 6.
- <sup>15</sup> SANKALIA, H. D. "Beginnings of Civilization in South India" in Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies, ed R. E. Asher. Madras 1971. International Association of Tamil Research, pp. 27-38.
- <sup>16</sup> FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, G. VON. "Chenchus, Jungle Folk of the Deccan". London 1943. Macmillan & Co.
- <sup>17</sup> THURSTON E. "Castes and Tribes of Southern India". Vol. III. Madras 1909. Govt. Press pp. 75.
- <sup>18</sup> GRIGSON, W. "The Maria Gonds of Bastar". London 1949. Oxford University Press.
- <sup>19</sup> BADEN-POWELL, B. H. "The Indian Village Community". HRAF Press, New Haven, USA, 1957.
- <sup>20</sup> FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, G. VON. "The Reddis of the Bison Hills". London 1945. Macmillan & Co. The data regarding the Hill Reddis throughout relates to the early 1940's.
- <sup>21</sup> op. cit. p. 84.
- <sup>22</sup> op. cit. pp. 335-6.
- <sup>23</sup> op. cit.
- <sup>24</sup> op. cit.
- <sup>25</sup> op. cit.
- <sup>26</sup> op. cit. pp. 280-1.
- <sup>27</sup> op. cit. pp. 279-280.
- <sup>28</sup> op. cit. pp. 335-6. The worship of the Earth Mother exists in other Dravidian speaking areas in South India e.g. Rampur village in Mysore (cf. Srinivas op. cit. p. 27) and Kumbapettai village in Tanjore, Tamilnadu (cf. K. Gough op. cit. p. 88).
- <sup>29</sup> GRIGSON, W. op. cit.
- <sup>30</sup> op. cit.
- <sup>31</sup> op. cit. pp. 174-9.
- <sup>32</sup> op. cit. p. 179.
- <sup>33</sup> op. cit. p. 180.
- <sup>34</sup> op. cit. p. 291.
- <sup>35</sup> op. cit. p. 284.
- <sup>36</sup> op. cit. p. 290.
- <sup>37</sup> BADEN-POWELL, B. H. "The Indian Village Community". p. 1718.
- <sup>38</sup> THURSTON, E. op. cit. pp. 357s.

## SOCIAL & CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

- <sup>25</sup> BADEN-POWELL, B. H. op. cit. pp. 164.
- <sup>26</sup> FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, C. VON. "The Raj Gond of Adilabad. A Peasant Culture of the Deccan". London 1948. Macmillan & Co. Data cited here generally relate to the 1940's and preceding periods.
- <sup>27</sup> op. cit. pp. 51-2.
- <sup>28</sup> SRINIVAS, M. N. "Social Structure of a Mysore Village" in "India's Villages". Calcutta 1955. West Bengal Govt. Press. pp. 198.
- <sup>29</sup> SILVANANAYAGAN, S. "The Regional Classification of Land in Ancient Tamil Country", in Proceedings of ..... Seminar on Tamil Studies (op. cit.), pp. 219-25.
- <sup>30</sup> DUBY, S. G. "A Deccan Village", in "India's Villages" (op. cit.) pp. 180s.
- <sup>31</sup> "An Indian Village". London 1956. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- <sup>32</sup> SILVANANAYAGAN, S. op. cit.
- <sup>33</sup> HUTTON, J. H. "Caste in India." London 1946. Cambridge at the University Press. pp. 59-61; 143-45.
- <sup>34</sup> SRINIVAS, M. N. op. cit. pp. 278.
- <sup>35</sup> VANAMAMALAI, N. in "Proceedings of ... Seminar on Tamil Studies" (op. cit.). pp. 239-41.
- <sup>36</sup> SRINIVAS, M. N. "Religion and Society among the Coorgs". Oxford 1952. Clarendon Press.
- <sup>37</sup> NANNATHASIBY, L. "Village and Temple Administration in the Allur Inscriptions", in Proceedings ... Tamil Studies (op. cit.) pp. 245-250.
- <sup>38</sup> SIVERTSEN, D. "When Caste Barriers Fall". London 1963. George Allen and Unwin. pp. 14-5.
- <sup>39</sup> GORGI, K. "The Social Structure of an Indian Village", in "India's Villages" (op. cit.) p. 82.
- <sup>40</sup> KARASHIMA, N. "The Power Structure of the Chola Rule", in Proceedings ... Tamil Studies (op. cit.) pp. 235s.
- <sup>41</sup> VANAMAMALAI, N. "Consolidation of Feudalism and Anti-Feudal Struggles during Chola Imperialist Rule", in Proceedings ... Tamil Studies. (op. cit.). pp. 239-245.
- <sup>42</sup> ALAMIN B. AND R. "The Birth of Indian Civilization". U.K. 1968. Penguin Books. pp. 161, 165, 168. The pottery in these sites recall pre-Harappan Amri, Kalibangan (Sind) and Baluchistan sites (cf. op. cit. maps pp. 102, 128.). It is possible that the Harappan invasion was the beginning of the southward and eastward migration of these Mediterranean Caucasoids, later accelerated by Indo-Aryan immigrations. No archaeological relics of the Harappans have been discovered as yet in South India. Whatever the linguistic identity of the Harappans, the Brahuis of Sind and Baluchistan are said to speak a Dravidian language today. It is possible that some of these pre-Harappans were Dravidian-speaking ancestors of similar linguistic groups in South India. The pre-Harappans were the first to introduce the cultivation of cereals and the use of metals (copper) in the Indus valley-initial steps towards civilization.
- <sup>43</sup> BOSE, D. op. cit. Chs. 4, 5 and 6.





# Sociological and Formal Problems of Modern Indian Art: Study of an Approach

RATAN PARIMOO

WHAT are the hallmarks of modern art, in general? We know that since the time of Renaissance in Europe, the word "modern" has continuously been used. In fact even until the ushering in of this century books on history of art considered the beginning of modern art with Giotto, implying a break with the medieval times. But in recent years more and more, "modern" is construed as break with the past and break with the tradition—in the context of European art it refers to the classical and the realistic tradition. "Modern" also has now come to mean what belongs to the contemporary times. In that sense we have then modern art in each historical period lasting for a duration of time. That is each age will have its own modern art in relation to the "spirit" or "zeitgeist" of the age. This also points out to another fact which is the aspect of change, that is, what is "modern" today may not seem "modern" tomorrow. Conversely some features from the past may have a significance and relevance for the present and such a development may also be singled out as modern. All this leads to the basic theoretical issue, which is, the concept of the very phenomenon of modern art. In the formation of this concept we have also to take recourse to the facts of history.

Let us first take up the issue of "revolt". The first revolt which was responsible in rejecting the supremacy of classical ideals was initiated by the 'Romanticists'. With Romanticism we also see the beginning of a continuous series of revolts e.g. Realists, the subsequent generation after Romanticists, rejected "Romanticism". Thus revolt involves rejection of the existing values. It involves replacing them with a new set of values and in turn the new set of values creates a situation when they too are subsequently rejected and replaced.

Granted that in the past, i.e., even before "Romanticism", we do note changes in values from Greek to early Christian art or from medieval to renaissance, the mannerist interlude, Baroque etc.

Even in Greek art itself the Hellenistic rejection of the classical or in our own country we are familiar with the Gupta repudiation of Kushan naturalism, the rival points of view of Rajput and Mughal artists, the Rajput rejection of Jain conservatism etc. But since the "Romanticists" there is a quickening of the pace of the revolt from decade to decade and even within a decade, as we have been witnessing during our own lifetime.

Next premise is that the revolutionary is at war with his own time, with complacency and stagnation, with whatever becomes a hindrance, with the so-called accepted rules and norms. In the action of the revolutionary then there is an affirmation of the individual bringing to the fore his spiritual crisis. Growing individualism is a fundamental development from the Romantics onward, the assertion of individual's right to express his experiences and feelings, the way he feels them and in the technique and manner in which he likes to portray them. The individual therefore fights against the collective, he refuses to conform. The individual does not wait for the behest of a commission. He does not paint for the satisfaction of the patron, but paints through a compulsion, to satisfy his urges and needs, painting becomes faith, a part of life, life itself, it represents the artist's weltanschauung. We have a record of this spiritual crisis in Van Gogh's letters, in the work of Goya or Nolde, to give a few examples.

Modern also signifies progress. The revolt is not in the negative sense alone. There is an element of progress, an element of newness, "innovation", a broadening of horizons, the germ of an idea hinted earlier, which is taken up and fructified by the successive generation. The range of innovations involves the handling of technique or invention of new technique, innovations of imagery, a new use of already known symbols or conjuring of new images in new relationships. This leads to the concept of "avant garde". Those who stage the revolt, who reject, who replace with "innovations", are also the forward looking, the "avant garde". The revolutionary is also the leader.

There is the insatiable urge on the part of the man to go on and on, never to stop. This may be taken as a purely western concept but this can apply particularly to modern technological society, therefore even to the present-day eastern cultures which are also on way to becoming modern technological societies. "Modern" also signifies an attitude. It involves retrospection. An attitude to past, re-interpreting, a new and fresh sorting out, the relevant and the irrelevant, the significant and the insignificant.

The last point I want to mention is the milieu, the spirit of the time,

the Zeitgeist. Its importance is more and more becoming clear due to the work of the sociologist and the anthropologist. Each phase of a society having certain peculiar political institutions, philosophic and religious outlook and other social forces at work which give it its distinct character and once the political and economic structure changes and philosophical outlook becomes different, the whole character of that era of the society changes. The conclusion is that an epoch has a given social characteristic and given those characteristics we have a certain special kind of art. The corresponding relationship between the social forces and the art conditioned by these cannot be underestimated. The "moments" of revolution in art are also epochal moments sociologically. With social change, change in art is inevitable. The series of changes from the Romantics onwards have also coincided with changes in philosophical and scientific thinking and in the political and economic setup and ideologies. The "moment of cubism", which is also simultaneous to another epochal change namely, "Abstraction", has been at length described by John Berger, e.g., the splitting of the atom, the propounding of the theory of relativity, world war, rising working class militancy, Bolshevik revolution and so on.

For the critic these tenets (if we may call them so) of the concept of the phenomenon of modern art, serve as measuring rods for evaluation, as norms of value judgement, as scales for greatness or significances. We thus arrive at Delacroix's greatness as the leader of the revolting Romanticists, Goya as reflecting poignant spiritual crisis, Monet as the Impressionist par excellence, therefore his works being superior to the rest of the impressionists, hence their higher monetary value. Picasso, the inventor of cubism, Kandinsky as the first abstract artist, Jackson Pollock as the first action painter; the importance of 'Desmoiselles D'Avignon' as the first cubist painting, 'Guernica' as the most forceful social document.

## II

Now we shall try to explore, presuming, that such a framework as elucidated above, is applicable to the study of Indian art of the present century, then how may we characterise it as a phenomenon, whether it could be called modern, whether it would be necessary to qualify it within Indian context, what will be our estimation of its achievements, how may we evaluate the artists of various generations and how will such an evaluation be effected by the premises that we may assume.

It may be convenient to start with the sociological angle. Modern art in the western context is closely related to the kind of social situation that

is obtained there. This social situation is characterised by breaking up of monarchic rule leading to the formation of democratic society, Industrial revolution and the impact of scientific and technological advances. We have on the one hand a crisis caused by these and on the other hand an attempt to come to terms with the changing patterns. In the western society the changes are caused by their own intellectual efforts so that they are absorbed and assimilated and then at that stage it is ready to receive another new development, i.e., every new achievement is solidly based on a previous one.

The Indian situation is not of the same kind. Ours has been a traditional society which is now coming face to face with the new techno-scientific developments. These developments are not as a consequence of our own intellectual efforts but out of sheer necessity have had to be adopted. That is why we do not get the necessary breathing space and time to absorb one development which would give us the readiness to accept the next development. Consequently we are faced abruptly with a series of far-reaching changes. This has resulted in a curious crisis of its own kind so that we have all the stages present in our society from the neolithic to the atomic, i.e., we have communities who have not yet seen a telephone or radio or electricity, to the other extreme of sophisticated scientific workers and research establishments. We have a small urban class but even this possesses many contradictions. The so-called well-to-do may live in a modern house with all the new amenities but their thinking at social and other levels may still be conservative or even unabashedly backward. We do not also have the influential cultivated urban elite base which has been the mainstay of modern movements in the west.

Therefore, the peculiar social environment obtaining here in India is going to have its restraining effects on the creative efforts since certain kinds of preoccupations may seem out of context e.g. the insufficient availability of certain technological facilities will necessarily limit the experimentation of the kind which attempts to bring art and technology closer. The socio-cultural contradictions which have emerged alongside the current industrialization processes, are also reflected in the present-day artistic activity in our country in the mutations of which western, traditional, past and present elements, come to fusion, necessitating readjustment of values but more often leading to confusion.

The patron and artist relation is another factor to be taken note of, alongside the cultural context of art. In the past, art served a definite purpose. An artist or groups of artist craftsmen were employed and assigned specific projects. The artist knew the reason for which he was executing a work and its appreciation by the patron or the audience was assured since

they too reacted to the work within that definite reference. Both these situations have changed for the Indian artist. The Indian artist today is transplanted from the feudalist setup into an urban/industrial setup left free to fend for himself with regard to stomach nourishment as well as creative nourishment. He no more requires the traditional sculptural or pictorial vocabulary to satisfy his lord or to communicate to his social group. In the changed circumstances the traditional conventions obviously have no more validity as their meaningfulness for the society has withered.

Sociologically yet another factor is noteworthy. During the period of British domination we became aware of our backwardness and decaying of our culture. The attempts to bring about a revival or renaissance was visualised in terms of (i) re-evaluating the past which we began to learn to respect and (ii) adaptation of the new rationalist ideas. Just as there were two schools among religious and social reformers, there were similarly two opposed ideologies among the nationalist politicians. These ideas also had their impact on the artistic thinking where again two schools of ideologies emerged. One who thought in terms of reviving the tradition, taking a cue from the past, banishing all the supposedly anachronistic western elements and accepting the whole range of features of the eastern arts as the worthy cornucopia to tap from.

The revivalists were hopeful of creating a new art which would possess the mysterious 'Indianness', a term which was first introduced by E. B. Havell, though the need for there being an Indian element in Indian art was also suggested by early British administrators who recommended to paint themes from ordinary Indian life as well as epics and myths, but in the European realistic manner. Contrarily, the revivalists prescribed using the Indian method of the miniature and the fresco. Some among them in Bengal also visualised a new Indian art in the future. The controversy began while posing the question whether it can be done by an insulatory outlook or by being openminded and responsive to the newly emerged European revolutionary movements. For a time the "Indianness" went into the background and there was a whole-hearted welcome and adaptation of every new manifestation that the Indians heard from Europe, partly to which were also artists from the north as well as those based in Bombay during the forties and fifties.

This generation of artists styled themselves as progressives believing in internationalism. They saw to it that the concept of Indianness was downgraded as retrogressive and reactionary, synonymous with narrowmindedness. This extreme stand has softened to give rise to the view that although Indianness is really not essential yet if it is desired it will come automatically, when the artist happens to be sincere, and opens up himself to his environment. Whether one can really know who is sincere and could one trace

Indianness in such a sincere artist, is really a question—a question that is probably insolvable as it is to justify its desirability. This has shifted the attention from the quintessential hallowed past to the Indian sensibility which purports to show awareness of contemporary Indian ethos and its potential to furnish sustenance for creativity.

Potentially the idea of "Indianness" has never really died down. As an idea it has been latently persistent and has thrown up a series of revivals. If the first revival was that of the classical phase (Ajanta, Mughal) subsequently the more folk and primitive variations of Indian art drew attention starting from Bengal pat (Jamini Roy), Basohli (Sher Gil), Jain in the early fifties, and in the recent years all kinds of tribal artifacts have been adapted by both painters and sculptors. The latest but not the last fad to be plagiarised are the Tantric diagrammatic symbols. If the initial preoccupation with the past was in terms of chauvinism, the subsequent manifestations are a balanced and genuine attempt in not only grasping the tradition (a fond hope of A. K. Coomaraswamy) but also a creative and formal re-evaluation of it in terms of the modern sensibility. This has also enlarged the meaning and the field of tradition. Awareness of "Indianness" has been responsible for the picking up of pictorial means like painting without cast shadows and without perspective, painting with lines and in bright flat colours. Very often the results have been mere pastiches, repetitive and uncreative, only betraying lack of taste and judgement. Yet it is noteworthy that such pictorial means came in current usage because of their modernity since such a pictorial vocabulary was approved by the non-illusionistic tendencies in the west and hence regarded as sign of avantgardism and internationalism out here.

We have probably never had a situation when there was an avant garde. Perhaps Bengal school could in the early twenties be given the stature of avant garde. And the artists of the thirties and forties could be construed to have staged a rebellion against it. Curiously we have now got another rebellion which is the rebellion against the internationalism. Here such a rebellion gets the stature of avant garde yet the actual pictorial achievement is measured by way of establishing kinships and parallels with certain current western fashions, e.g., the so-called new figurative painting of the recent years. It is an attempt in wanting to become insular but the dichotomy is provided by the fact of the artist's helplessness against being subsumed by foreign influences. Thus intention and belief rather than facts of the situation achieve the status of norms-providing factors.

Indian art criticism (concerning the study of twentieth century Indian art, if we may begin using that phrase) at times gets hopelessly lopsided. Undeserved and exaggerated significances and importances get attached to

## FORMAL PROBLEMS OF MODERN INDIAN ART

works of art or individual artists if they may seem to echo a certain so-called view of Indian sensibility (be it social consciousness, Indian environment and what have you). But in actual fact the artist or the work in question may be highly derivative and a poor imitation of a minor western artist if not a repetition of an earlier solution by another Indian artist. A case in point of the failure of the Indian art critics to rise to the occasion is the complete bypassing of the recently held retrospective exhibition of a senior artist in Bombay.

Indian art criticism has to come out of dilettantism. Empty enthusiasms have to be replaced by professional competence and balance, achieved through breadth of knowledge based on historical perspective, information and critical insight. We have to establish a counterpart of what the Indian film critics call "filmography" or what in cricket is called the score history. There is enough scope for technical and intrinsic study of trends as they are occurring, of the growth of individual artists and of separate works, to establish originality, topicality, to pinpoint significant landmarks and in order to provide and put to test hypotheses for norms of judgement and evaluation. Even regional features and contributions to the comprehensive national art scene deserve to be analysed and sorted out.





# In Quest of Methodology: with special reference to Indian Kavya

I. D. SEREBRYAKOV

It is but natural that in the course of development of some branch of science the accumulation of factual material reaches a level where the old concepts begin to contradict the accumulated facts. Hence the need is felt not only of revising obsolete concepts and working out new ones but, above all, of critical evaluation of methodological positions. Such a need is felt for quite a time in Indian philology in general and in research in Indian literary and historical process in particular. In fact, Soviet indology faced this at its very inception. There are many reasons for this.

First, prerevolutionary indology developed mainly in connection with the progressive social ideas. Secondly, the October revolution put before social sciences fundamentally new and profoundly democratic tasks. The branches of oriental studies were not exceptions to this. One of the tasks was criticism of methodological principles of bourgeois orientology which briefly speaking, in many cases were determined by commitment to colonial practice of imperialist states. The influence of this was felt also in those spheres of orientology which seemingly did not concern directly contemporary times, for instance, the study of Indian Ancient and Mediaeval literatures.<sup>1</sup>

After the Second World War, in the conditions of collapse of imperialist colonial system and increasing influence of socialist forces on all the aspects of world development including the development of science and culture, there took place the process of liberating social sciences from colo-

<sup>1</sup> The abovementioned questions were discussed by us in a number of other works: "Selected Works by Russian Indologists", Moscow, 1962, pp. 1-8; "Essays on Ancient Indian Literature", Moscow, 1971, pp. 5-44; "On Some Aspects of Literary and Historical Process in India", *NARODI AZII I AFRIKI*, 1969, No. 5.

nial aftermath. In the conditions of independent development of the peoples of free Asian and African countries the questions of cultural development and attitude towards cultural heritage occupied important place in the state practice of those countries, particularly in ideological struggle. In this respect India is a typical example.

These circumstances in turn could not but influence the development of indology in general. Since we are dealing here with cultural legacy, the study of literary and historical process in Ancient and Mediaeval India has special interest for us. This has been testified by the work of the prominent Canadian indologist A. K. Warder *Indian Kavya Literature* published in India in 1972, which in many respects opens a new page of indology.

#### PREDECESSORS

The book begins with a Foreword devoted to author's methodological and methodical positions. Warder is right in asserting that the need for a new evaluation of Indian literature has matured (see p. 2). His work includes a brief, extremely sharp and, in many aspects, just review of the deficiencies of the works by his predecessors. In his opinion they, first, presented at best just a general outline history of Indian literature, and, secondly, in the worst case they formulated wrong views on its nature and, third, by evaluating it by Western (mostly Greek) standards considering them the only norm of judging literary merits. They believed that to the extent to which Indian literature did not fit in with those standards, it was inferior to Greek or English literature. Further he writes: "This cultural arrogance, accepted from their environment by scholars often most modest as individuals, was in some cases especially in British writers, inflated to the most overweening proportions by the wind of colonialist and imperialist propaganda, this too docilely and dutifully accepted from their environment. . . . ."

"The systematic disparagement of Indian culture during + 19 and + 20 became a mighty industry with countless ramifications" (p. viii).

After such a politically sharp summarising of the results of the development of bourgeois indology for the period of almost two centuries we could expect a concrete analysis of its development or, at least, mention of the positive work done by our numerous predecessors. However, instead of doing that the author writes: "We may leave any anti-colonial counterblast, and the criticism of prejudiced secondary sources to those who are fond of polemic and political analysis" (p. viii).

The abovementioned words show that the author is not at all alien to polemics or political evaluations. But his evaluations would have gained

greater weight had he based them on a concrete analysis of the history of studying in Europe and in the West of Indian literature in general, the influence rendered by political and ideological factors, on the analysis of principled differences of views on Indian literature held, on the one hand, by I. Herder and G. Forster and on the other, by German Romanticists—P. Bohlen and A. Weber as well as M. Mueller and L. Gobineau and others. He had to pay attention to the differences between national schools of world Indology and, naturally, to the development of Indology in Russia and in the Soviet Union. Warder's refusal to acknowledge what is positive in the contributions of the predecessors cannot but cause astonishment since without them he could not have taken a really serious step forward.

### THE AIM OF THE WORK

"Our purpose here is the direct and positive enjoyment of literature. We shall regard it as axiomatic that the literature studied should be presented on its own terms, therefore we shall seek guidance from its creators and from the long and ancient Indian tradition of literary criticism which developed with it" (p. viii).

This is the definition of the aim of the work, which, naturally, causes misgivings to the reader that he wants to remain confined between the walls of national specifications. However, the categorical nature of the statement can be explained by the heat of polemics. The author recognises the existence of world literature and wants to make Indian literature available to scholars dealing with world literature (p. 9). He also writes about humanism of Indian literature making, thus, humanism an important aspect of its ideological and aesthetic characteristic. This aspect of Indian literature, in his opinion, is shared with other literatures of the world. Warder states that the subject of *kavya* literature "... is human experience of life, accumulated over thousands of years, an epic of humanity which is not available to us in any other form. This experience is presented in terms of the human emotions: the reactions of people to the situations of life" (p. xiii).

We can hardly suppose that the author intends to isolate Indian *kavya* literature from the general laws governing the development of literature revealed by the experience of world literature, but his formulation makes such a supposition possible. A. K. Warder feels this and to some degree without noticing it is forced to correct his position. When it comes to such a methodologically important question as relations between a creative personality and society he thinks it essential to stress the necessity to analyse this or that writer or poet in his social medium, as a real personality in real circumstances of life, in genuine historical conditions (p. ix). Warder draws

one's attention, also to the importance of social movements for understanding literature (p. ix), to the fact that different literary genres appealed to different classes (p.168), and so on.

And here it would be proper to ask a question: What, in his opinion, does "Indian kavya literature" mean? His definition is very clear and, in our opinion, is not only important but also productive from methodological point of view: "The term kavya means literature as a form of art. It excludes scriptures or religious writing (is therefore essentially secular), histories (except when history is made the subject of art, aiming at aesthetic rather than historical 'truth') and all technical writings on philosophy, science, the arts and so on" (p. x). "Kavya is distinguished from most scripture in that it is humanist, centred in man . . . presenting its truths and its comments through images and individual characters" (pp.xii-xiii).

It must be added that he understands literature not as a closed aesthetic entity which lives and develops by its inner laws, but as an ideological and aesthetic phenomenon which has an objective aim: "to teach us humanism". Risking to share Warder's reproach to those "who are fond of political analysis and polemics" we still would like to cite the passage with which the Foreword ends: "Man is still poor in humanity, a mere beginner as a social being. We have too little and too uncertain guidance. Let us then add to our common inheritance the experience of India, bequeathed to us by the several thousand poets, dramatists and story-tellers who have reproduced it in their kavyas" (p. xv).

This appeal is so natural for a Western and in the past hundred years it was repeated so often that we cannot but sympathise with the author. We fully agree with him as far as the widest possible popularisation of Indian kavya literature among the nations of the world is concerned. But, really, it would be the greatest injustice to forget everything what was done in the name of humanism and for the sake of man in all other cultures and literatures and to forget those who criminally attempted to stop the development of humanism and to return mankind to the level of animal existence. And besides that, humanity learns lessons from history and strives to genuine humanism when each personality enjoys maximal opportunities for individual development in the interests of all. The world of socialism—a reality of our times—is a convincing prospect of the development of mankind.

#### THE LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

Determining the content of the term *kāvya* as fiction literature proper distinct from *āgama* (religious works), *itihāsa* (historical and epic traditions) and from *śāstra* (philosophical and scientific literature) Warder also estab-

lishes chronological limits. The beginning of the development of literature when it is already recognised as a special kind of art falls, in his opinion, in the period between the 5th-1st centuries B.C. However he makes a reservation: since we are dealing with emergence of literature as a kind of art we shall have to address ourselves to Vedas, Tripitaka and Epics (p. 2). Meanwhile the author fails to notice that despite all his criticisms of the imperfection and erroneous nature of the works of his predecessors, he uses the scheme which was frequently repeated before him. As soon as he raises the question about the language of the literature he is forced to take into account the real facts of the literary development of Indian peoples and to introduce important corrections into his scheme.

Recognising the important role of Sanskrit in Indian literature, Warder justly draws attention to the complexity of linguistic situation in Ancient India, to the fact that "At least a dozen of these were used in literature and particularly in kavya" (p. 3). After a consistent analysis of the available information about these languages that is Prākṛits and Apabhraṃśa Warder comes to the correct conclusion that kavya was not practically confined to any group of languages (p. 7) and draws another conclusion which is really new for Western Indology: "If we attempt to follow the main line of development in India we must include Sanskrit, the Prākṛits and Apabhraṃśa on an equal footing and we must also notice the developments in the modern languages and in the Dravidian languages" (p. 8).

Linguistic parameters are inevitable features of literature which cannot exist beyond languages and using languages as a means of differentiation of literary development is, of course, not a new method. What is really new here is Warder's rejection, though not always consistent, of the hierarchy of languages which put Sanskrit on the summit of the linguistic development. Disintegration of Sanskrit gave birth, first, to Prākṛit, then to Apabhraṃśa and after that—to the host of modern Indo-Aryan languages.

At the same time the researcher is faced with the need to introduce several new categories into his constructions. First, he must decide the question of the nature of phenomena screened behind the term "kavya". Second, there inevitably arises a question on the subject or subjects of these phenomena. Third, these questions must be analysed in concrete historical conditions. Having no intention to solve all these issues for him, we shall allow ourselves to note that his reasonings lack the concepts of literary and historical process and the people as the subject of these processes, the people who are understood dialectically, who are simultaneously an ethos and a society. Here, naturally, questions will arise of correlations between the world literary-historical process and regional and local ones confined to the literature of this or that people, questions of objective nature of the laws

governing literary development, of its social and historical determination and, lastly, the question of literature as an important element of aesthetic cognition of the world.

However, without raising all these questions (they make themselves felt in some parts of his work), Warder sees the basis of the unity of literary-historical process in India in the presence of an aesthetic theory without which *kavya* could not exist: "Indeed *kavya* presupposes *kavya* theory: if there were no conscious theory behind it a work would perhaps not be *kavya*" (p. 10).

Thus, he makes the very development of literature dependent on the presence of an already formed aesthetic theory and makes this provision a starting point for organising the whole material subject to research. He is probably the first, compared with his predecessors, to formulate so clearly the traditional point of view which found its reflection both in the works of Western indologists and Indian literary critics and which, generally speaking, is rather close to the traditional Brahmanical point of view.

The layout of Warder's research is as follows: the first eight chapters comprising the first volume are dedicated to the questions of aesthetics (since it was the latter that determined the development of *kavya*) and of literary criticism as well as social medium of literature; the next eleven (the second volume) deal with the emergence and formation of the style (or styles), which was to become *kavya*. This volume also contains a review of early works (from the 6th century B.C. up to the 2nd century A.D.) which became models for many authors of later period. And lastly, ten chapters comprising the third volume which covers the period from the 3rd to 7th centuries A.D. when ". . . a feudal type of social organisation was consolidated in India" (p. xi). As A. K. Warder emphasises, the majority of works on aesthetics deals exactly with the period of feudalism with which their authors ". . . more at home in this period than in early *kavya*, which they neglected" (p. xi).

Along with that the author deems it necessary to stress specially two points. First, his research is based on the analysis of original works in Indian languages and, second the work by an Indian literary critic M. Krishnamachariar, *A History of Classical Sanskrit Literature*<sup>2</sup> served as a model for him. Moreover, Warder attached to it so great an importance that he considered his own work, in a certain sense, as a commentary to Krishnamachariar's work. It would be wrong to agree with him on that issue because those two works are divided by a whole epoch. But one can agree that Krishnamachariar's book will retain for a long time its scientific importance as the richest source of information.

Concluding his reflections on methodology and methods of research

<sup>2</sup> M. Krishnamachariar, "A History of Classical Sanskrit Literature", Madras, 1939.

Warder stresses that he “. . . has done his best to make it as authentic as possible and to embody his subject in his book without interposing his own personality” (p. xiii).

After the publication of the next volumes we shall be able to judge how successful he has been in accomplishing his task. Meanwhile the reader and the critic have to ponder over the materials on aesthetics and theory of literature compiled by the author in the first volume.

#### LITERARY THEORY AND LITERARY EXPERIENCE

Chapter II of the book is devoted to Indian aesthetics, which is considered by Warder mostly as theory of aesthetic perception as the last was formulated in classical poetics and first of all in *Bhāratīyanāṭyaśāstra*. Having declared that categories of *rasa* and *prīti* represent real foundation of Indian aesthetics and that some remarks on literary theory may be found in the Pali canon and works of some early authors, Warder concentrates on two most important sources namely Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, which according to Warder most correctly and fully reflects social aims of literature, and *Bhāratīyanāṭyaśāstra*, in which the concept of *rasa* was given its due place.

Attention has to be given to some objective aspects which cause certain contradictions, in certain degree logical as well as historical incongruity of the author's views. According to him the theory of *rasa* is the only foundation of whole edifice of Indian aesthetics, as it is propounded in *Bhāratīyanāṭyaśāstra*, dated by Warder VI century B.C. As it is stated by him, different parts of this treatise belong to different epochs and he guesses particularly that Ch. I of *BNS* was incorporated—and even composed—much later than Ch. VI, containing the concept of *rasa*. He also supposes that this treatise is actually “. . . simply a compilation of rather miscellaneous ideas handed down among the actors” (p. 16), the “. . . outcome of a long period of practical stagecraft” (p. 20). One may agree with such assessment, but from this some other conclusions may be derived. We are bound to raise the next question: Does it mean that all ideas, concepts, advices, which are present in available MSS of *BNS* could be found in that “proto” *BNS*, which presumably came into being more than two thousand years ago? We think that certain precautions have to be taken and first of all we must not allow more antiquity to the evidences of the present text of *BNS* than they deserve.

There is another important consideration. The present text of *BNS* came to us in that version which was commented by Abhinavagupta. Consequently this version may be dated by period of VIII–IX centuries, because the famous scholar and commentator belonged to the last quarter of Xth–first quarter of XIth century. His *Abhinavabhāratī* is more exposition of his own thought than anything else—independent interpretation, which answer-



ed his own aims, views and concepts. His understanding of *BNS* and later commentaries on *BNS* influenced approach of Western indologists to the treatise itself and interpretation of it. This is felt most in understanding of tragedy as aesthetic category, the possibility of presentation of murder on the stage and some other points. Warder noted many divergences of theorists with "... the practical spirit of the *Natyasastra*" (p. 63).

Abhinavagupta's influence is being felt in the exaggeration of the importance of the theory of *rasa*-s, usually presented in accordance with Abhinavagupta's interpretation and not in conformity with the text of *BNS* itself. It seems that our Canadian colleague also did not escape it. Though the present text may be a compilation, an outcome of very continuous development, there is no reason to counterpose one part of *BNS* to another or to the text as a whole. We are convinced that the theory of *rasa* may be understood correctly only in the context of the whole treatise, of its quite wholesome aesthetic system, derived from the practical stagecraft in its historical development. One may see even from the enumeration of *BNS* chapters that it is a treatise on theatrical performance, on stagecraft, and not on dramaturgy and moreover not on aesthetics. It touches only those problems which are important for success of staging of a play. Stress on *rasa*, so characteristic for Warder's views, hardly may be justified, as well as his interpretation of passages of *rasa* taken from works of other treatises on poetics without attention to aesthetic system of each author.

Warder remarks that in certain cases it is "not uncommon to announce the theoretical standpoint to be illustrated at the beginning of a poem or play and to make some critical observations at the beginning of a novel" (p. 10). It seems that after such a statement it would be quite appropriate to take all such observations in their chronological sequence, generalize them and present the readers with overall picture of historically changing approach of ancient Indian authors to aesthetics and theory of literature.

I think that apart from Ch. VI some other chapters of *BNS* tells us about that what actually creates aesthetic views—for instance, Chapters I and XIV. Moreover those chapters treat such subjects in close connection with social role of theatre. Many conclusions of those chapters may be applied to other arts as well as to literature.

#### SOCIAL ROLE OF KAVYA

This problem is not touched much in Warder's book, as he did not put before himself such a purpose. The scholar limited himself to some considerations concerning strata in which *kavya* took its inception and developed and concerning those who created *kavya*. Nevertheless, he cannot miss this problem and touches it either in connection with assessment of some genres

of dramaturgy. Writing satire, he remarks: "The existence of a flourishing tradition of satire in ancient and mediaeval kavya must be reckoned with in assessing the literature as a whole, and some knowledge of it is indispensable to the appreciation of the more elevated literature which was in all times strongly influenced by the coexistence of satire, threatening to overwhelm the pompous or affected in a flood of ridicule" (p. 167). And even more decisively: "Kavya flourished as a literature of the whole of society, with different genres, appealing to different classes, with a variety of languages, with dramas regularly performed at popular festivals in the towns and villages" (pp. 167-168).

In such statements Warder goes far beyond traditional approach to the literature of Ancient and Early Mediaeval India, as literature devoid of any living contacts with the masses. Exactly in this connection the closing chapter of his book is extremely important—"Audience and readers of kavya and its social functions." Though this chapter is quite short it is tremendously important in its content. The author is highly concerned with the problem of popular sources and popular character of literature. Not only does he attract the reader's attention to the fact that kavya, either in the form of a theatrical performance, or as recitation of great Indian Epic poems, or as important elements of temple and popular festivals was an essential part of people's life. Warder points to the most significant factors, which define popular character of kavya; first of all its direct dependence on folklore—it derived quite a big portion of its content and inspiration from the people at large. Folk-song was a perennial source of forms for kavya (metres, genres) and essential part of contact (for instance, country life), as well as a source of inspiration, from which aesthetic theory of *dhvani* sprung up. The great heritage of popular narrative literature along with tradition contributed a lot to the content of kavya, to craftsmanship of story-telling, inclusive of realism. From the very beginning kavya absorbed many new languages, which expanded its expressive resources. From this follows undoubtedly organic ties of authors (whose names are well known, as well as anonymous) with folklore.

Warder understands that literary development cannot be treated as a certain undifferentiated stream, because every past society was a class society and, as it concerns reality, literature reflects in more or less degree relevant positions of classes which constitute such society (p. 202). "A more direct reflex of its popular basis is the literature of social criticism, satirical stories or novels, and dramas, also lyrics reflecting poverty and misery, occasionally cantos of an epic contrasting the rule of bad kings with the ideal. Here the people found expression for their needs, a means of protest against oppression and corruption, ideals to appeal and to demand" (pp. 200-201).

Exactly these two factors create the necessity to give concrete answer to the question—in which strata was kavya developed, who supported it and who created it, was it indeed so much literature of the elite, as it was stated though from different points of view by D. D. Kosambi and D. H. Ingalls. Warder's point of view differs greatly from that of his predecessors. He points out two aspects of kavya. "It is to a substantial extent the literature of the people as a whole, embodying their experiences and traditions; on the other hand it has generally a strong bias towards the ruling classes, who adopted it as their own, supported it, and to a great extent wrote it" (p. 202).

Highly significant is the contribution by our Canadian Indologist to such important aspect of methodology as treatment of kavya in concrete historical conditions. Practically for the first time and very convincingly, Warder has shown that in the creation of kavya participated not only—and may be not so much—palace and temple, but also fairs, literary circles and salons of lower strata of the town, traders etc. It means that all the main strata and classes of Indian feudal society contributed to the development of kavya, each in its own way, though not in equal parts. Starting from such idea and using a few more typical figures (Bana, Rajasekhara, Dandin, Puspadanta) the author tries to present before us a generalised image of the creator of kavya.

We have to drop a few significant points of the last chapter because they are more declared than proved. But two points deserve special attention. First, the general assessment of history and civilisation of India. Contemporary understanding of both is synthetic and dialectically includes contradictory elements, inclusive of Islam. As it concerns Warder's stand, it tends very much to equalize "Indian" with "Hindu". It seems that there is quite serious exaggeration of actual degree of tolerance in history of India. Wars in ancient and mediæval India were no less cruel and savage than in any other country. Even Jain Hemachandra described with explicit enjoyment how his suzerain accepts as a gift the severed head of the enemy put in golden mask. From other side, Warder interprets Islam as "antithesis to everything for what India stands". It goes without saying that it is a straightforward political statement, which contradicts his own stand, about which he told us in the very beginning.

I am myself inclined to think that everything that belongs to history must be looked at objectively, in interconnection and interaction of all factors, which acted in the historical process. Asoka waged the most cruel Kalinga war before he started to preach Dharma. Digvijaya of Gupta Emperors was also quite merciless military action, not marked by the slightest degree of tolerance. Bana painted truthful picture of ruinous march of Harsha's army in spite of his allegedly pro-Buddhist sympathies. Conquests

of Mahmud Gazni were so much common phenomena of feudal epoch as the Crusades, Norman conquest or conquests of Rajaraja Chola. Feudal tyranny does not depend much on colour and design of banner. And even in recent history, we may recall how during the World War I—not feudal, but imperialist—peoples following one and the same Jesus Christ, killed each other in his name with all possible means.

However, the assessment of the role of Islam in India in Warder's book stands in sharp contradiction with the noble thoughts of the author, expressed particularly in last paragraphs of the last chapter, where he expresses himself on the importance of Indian civilisation for world's culture and shows extremely profound understanding of the recent stage in its development.

"In the first part of this chapter it has been suggested that kavya literature, like all other literature (perhaps all literatures, in fact), has been the literature of a society divided into classes, and that, though it reflects the outlook of the whole of that society to a considerable extent, it inevitably reflects more fully and directly the outlook of the ruling or privileged class of society. It is only in the present epoch of human history that the ideal of a society not divided into classes, with equality of opportunity for everyone, has perhaps become a realisable political programme" (p. 216).

Warder says that social ideals which are reflected in Kavya literature, particularly in works created by authors who belonged to lower strata of the society, are unavoidably historically limited, but their humanistic content makes them "quite desirable and even unavoidable for mankind", (p. 217) that "kavya is a permanent record of mighty stream of human experience, and in part a comedy, a critique, of that experience. Having carried our survey someway we may reaffirm the thesis suggested at the outset, that kavya is the heritage of Indian civilisation and that in the present fusion of world civilisations it is necessary, if we value happiness and our very existence, that this inheritance should be appropriated by the whole human race" (pp. 217-218). But in this process is included—along with others—cultural heritage of those people who belong to Islam and consequently nobody may ignore the contribution of peoples of India to the development of Islam.

To sum up: the work of A. K. Warder is really important in the history of indology. There are some weak points which result mostly from the want of right implementation of the methodology accepted by the author. But the strongest point of this book, in light of which these weak points are hardly discernible, is the daring quest for methodology, which could guarantee objective, strictly scientific history of kavya, of ancient Indian literature, one of the most remarkable phenomenon in the world literary process, in which achievements of all peoples of India in the field of world art found synthesis.

•

# The Structural Concept of The Asian Frontier

J. P. S. UBEROI

## I

### SOUTH ASIA

THE war of the national liberation of Bangladesh was a momentous historical event of far-reaching consequences for Asia and the world.<sup>1</sup> Among its still unconsidered intellectual side-effects, one feels that it called on us all to reflect anew on the deeper causes of events in the southern Asian sub-continent and to reconsider some of our inherited conceptions of society and history. I want to suggest here in particular that the method of structural analysis, first long ago applied to the system of a human language by Panini, the old Sanskrit grammarian, and now widely adopted in many other fields of study in the natural as well as the social sciences, perhaps has some useful rôle to play in the new reconstruction of thought. By way of illustration, structural analysis may possibly help to focus a stronger light on the definition of south Asia, on its synchronic structure as a geopolitical system or sub-system and on the diachronic structure of its frontier history.

I shall understand by the term frontier a certain kind of a region or a zone, physical or ecological, geopolitical, ethnolinguistic or cultural, and not the politically delimited and demarcated boundary-lines between States. In this sense, I merely follow the usage of Owen Lattimore (1962) and other

<sup>1</sup> India and Afghanistan were among the first nations to extend full recognition to Bangladesh.

writers on the subject of frontierology, e.g. Curzon (1907), Holdich (1910), Lattimore (1940), Fraser-Tytler (1950), Bohannon and Plog (1967). On the other hand, whereas such writers have chiefly defined the frontier as the marches of civilization, on the analogy of the centre versus the periphery, I shall propose a very different structural conception.

The first principle of structuralism is that its unit of analysis is a relation or an ensemble of relations and not separate and distinct facts, things, elements, essences or qualities. In the second place, with regard to the philosophical dichotomy of qualities versus relations as two different kinds of properties of things or events, structural analysis seeks to explain the qualities of a thing or event by its relations, in reality as well as in perception, and not the other way round, i.e., explain the relations of a thing or event by its assumed qualities. Thirdly, this is the reason. I think, for the structuralist emphasis on wholeness or totality as a system of relations with an autonomous existence. Reference to such a totality, pattern or model provides the chief principle of explanation in structural analysis. In social and cultural studies, structuralist theory insists on the explanation of all systems of significance and meaning, under which we may include history or at any rate historiography, as constructions made up of relations and interconnections.

Nevertheless, fourthly, the so-called holism of structuralism is analytic and not synthetic. In other words, in structural study as in life's operations, investigation is strictly limited to the ensemble of relations, or relations of relations, which is relevant and pertinent to the purposes in hand. One is not allowed to extend the scope indefinitely towards the whole of some ultimate reality. I should like our structural concept of the frontier, therefore, to be understood as applicable to one or the other aspect of life and thought, one or the other significant system of relations, and I do not intend it to apply to a whole historical epoch or to a whole society as such.

It follows from what I have said that if we wish to understand the nature of South Asia, for example, we shall try to determine, not its unique qualities or its essence, but its relations with other sub-continent or segments within the geopolitical system of Asia or Eurasia as a whole. The definition by relations will in its turn require a concept of the Asian frontier, a vast and permanent chain of mountains, plateaus, deserts and steppes which divides Central or inner Asia, whose waters forever remain in its inland basins in the sense of finding no outlet into the oceans, and outer Asia. The conceptual opposition, inner Asia and outer Asia, allows us to comprehend simultaneously the pattern of the further subdivisions of outer Asia, eastern, northern, western, southern and south-eastern.

Thus, in answer to our original question, South Asia can be defined as all the lands extending from the great Asian frontier to the Indian Ocean.

It is of some interest that a similar relational definition was in fact given historically in the Epics and the Purāṇas. "North of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains lies the country which is called Bhārata; the descendants of Bhārata dwell therein" (Vishṇu Purāṇa. II: 3: 1).

*Uttaram yat samudrasya  
Himādreśchaiva dakṣiṇam,  
Varsham tad Bhāratam nāma  
Bhāratī yatra santatiḥ.*<sup>2</sup>

Here the land of Bharat is defined by interrelations between the two pairs of terms, (1) the north and the south, and (2) the mountain and the ocean. The point of origin, if one may use the term, of the southern Asian sub-continent would therefore seem to lie, not in the pure physiography of the Pamir knot, but somewhere between Mount Kailas and Lake Manasarowar, the common meeting point of the three great river systems, the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra (Tsangpo), which debouch into the Indian Ocean. At any rate, I would be inclined to argue that such was the old Sanskrit conception of the matter.

## II

### THE HINDU KUSH OF AFGHANISTAN

Let us now consider the diachronic structure or rhythm of history in relation to a small segment of the great Asian frontier, namely, the Hindu Kush of Afghanistan. The Hindu Kush, issuing from the Pamirs south-westwards, is the watershed between the Oxus system and the Indus system. Its northerly waters flow past Balkh, Samarkand, Bokhara and Khiva into the inland Aral Sea. Its southerly waters, on the other hand, via the Kabul and the Indus rivers (the ancient confluence of which, Salatura, was the grammarian Panini's birthplace), flow into the Arabian Sea.

It is well-recognized in geopolitical studies that the Hindu Kush forms part and parcel of the high mountainous frontier and watershed called the "great divide" between Central Asia and South Asia, but recognition of the frontier's structural significance has been unfortunately very fragmentary, one-sided and incomplete, as reflected in the writing of history. Historians of Central Asia and Afghanistan can be subdivided into two classes, the political and the cultural. Both classes of historians, with the possible excep-

<sup>2</sup> Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta 1965 : 7.



tion of the unjustly neglected Barthold,<sup>3</sup> appear to subscribe to the concept of Afghanistan as a geographical, political and cultural "no-man's-land" lying between India, Iran or West Asia and Central Asia; and to adopt as the prototype of Asian frontier history the original Aryan migration, north to south, with civilization victorious over barbarism, views which I should rather see discarded as essentially unhistorical.

Political historians have generally written in terms of such concepts as power and conquest, strategy and security, commerce and trade. For the British school, the "north-west frontier", interlinking the Oxus and the Indus, is thus reduced one-sidedly to the most important of the "gates of India" on the landward side. The Russian school, at any rate before the socialist revolution, had a similar general outlook.

Cultural historians, on the other hand, have sought to interpret events in terms of the historical origins, antecedents and diffusion of material and cultural traits and the migrations of peoples. They study the manifest cultural differences of the north and the south or the steppe and the sown, settled civilization and barbarian nomads, men of the turban and men of the helmet, peasants and potters, and so on. For them, any cultural ensemble is readily decomposed into its separate and distinct elements or traits, transposable at will into some other unstructured amalgam, giving no thought to relations and patterns of coherence and inner organization. The land of the Hindu Kush is regarded simply as the "interface" or "cross-roads", if not the "no-man's-land", lying between the prior and pre-existent cultural regions, India or Hindustan, Iran or Khorasan and Turan or Transoxiana. It had no life or contribution of its own—except perhaps in relation to the origin of wheat or white rhubarb and other oddities.

I have elsewhere attempted to suggest that we should first distinguish three levels of segmentation, region, sub-region and district, which should be borne in mind when we follow in detail the vicissitudes of frontier political history and attempt to determine its structure and rhythm.<sup>4</sup> I then outlined the two-thousand year old local history of one district, Andarab, in the central Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan, to show that, howsoever imperfect or defective the record and its compilation, Asian frontier history is the history of mutuality, reciprocity and the logic of interrelations, or else

. . . it is a tale  
'Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

The written records bequeathed us by men of many Eurasian civilizations,

<sup>3</sup> E. g. Barthold 1962.

<sup>4</sup> Uberoi 1970.

ancient Greek and Chinese, medieval Arab, Iranian, Turkish, Mongol and Indian, as well as modern Afghan, not to mention the British and other Europeans, all notice Andarab and the Hindu Kush region at one time or another. If one can but piece them together, perhaps one can show that historical events which occurred on the frontier were not without significance for the wider world.

Following the ancient Achaemenians of Persia, the Greeks, both before and during the conquest by Alexander of Macedon in 328 B.C., crossed the Hindu Kush frontier from the south to the north into Bactria. It was owing to their long settlement there that the finest realistic examples of ancient Greek portraiture art are to be found, not within Europe at all, but on the superb Bactrian coins of Afghan 'Turkistan. The Sakas and other "barbarians", in the middle of the second century B.C., and the Kushanas, in the first century A.D., then reversed the political traffic and crossed the same Asian frontier from the north to the south, so interlinking the Oxus and the Indus into the fifth century A.D. The Kushana kings were thus in a sense a link between India and China.

The ethnolinguistic history and the religio-cultural history, when they come to be written, will tell a like tale, although with different periods. Perhaps it will be conceded that Zoroastrianism was a native product of the region, one of the original gifts of the frontier. As is well known, the faith of Buddhism and the Kabul Sahis, both Hindu and Buddhist, successfully crossed the Asian frontier from the south. Islam then traversed it from the north after 740 A.D., when the contest in Tukharistan (Balkh) was decided in favour of the Arabs. Islam slowly won the frontier in religion, politics and culture.

In political history the Ghaznavids and the Ghorids incorporated the Hindu Kush frontier from the south in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries A.D. The conquering Mongols of Central Asia, Chingiz in 1221 A.D. and Timur (Tamerlane) in 1398 A.D., subsequently did so from the north. The Mongols held the frontier, under the Chaghatays and the Timurids, until the rise of Uzbek khanates on the Oxus river in the sixteenth century. The southern Mughals of India and the northern Uzbeks later came to terms, and the Mughals under Shah Jahan also to grief, over the wild highlands of the Asian frontier, for governing those "lawless" regions was always infinitely more difficult than conquering them. It seems that Akbar the Great had entered into a treaty of friendship with Abdullah Khan Uzbek (d. 1598), whereby the latter had obtained definite recognition of the Hindu Kush as the boundary between the two Empires of India and Turan. But the work of imperial diplomacy did not long endure.

As is well-known, the provinces lying north of the Hindu Kush, Balkh,

Qunduz of the Qataghan Uzbeks and Badakhshan, were finally won and incorporated into the national kingdom of Afghanistan in 1750 A.D., and the unruly wilderness was reduced to order within the new national State. After 1850 or so the former Uzbek possessions south of the Oxus consequently became known as Afghan Turkistan.

The pattern of all such facts, the grammar of frontier history, surely will not fit either the oft-repeated theory of a "no-man's-land" or the other old theory of turbulent Central Asian hordes now and again coming down, for one reason or another, through the "gates of India". The original Aryan migration across the frontier, vast and momentous though it was for Asian history, yet gives an incomplete clue to the underlying structure of reciprocity and exchange in the relations of inner Asia and outer Asia. It was not the model and prototype of these relations, but only one side of the whole story, synchronic and diachronic, which we must unravel and reconstruct.

The structural concept of the frontier, I believe, enables us to perceive the pattern and the rhythm of an otherwise meaningless array of facts. The long and chequered Hindu Kush history is not merely the story of marginality or peripheral remoteness from the heartlands of Asian civilization, nor yet of the disconnected comings and goings of armies and peoples, things, traits and ideas. The high and wild mountains which form the backbone of Afghanistan not merely divided the Oxus and the Indus, Central Asia and South Asia, but also simultaneously interconnected the two parts of inner

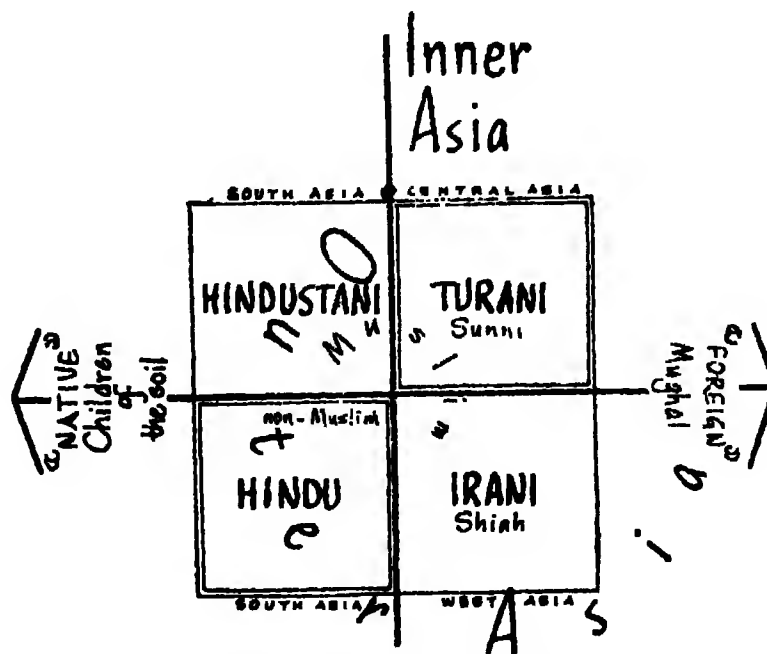


FIG. 1 *Inter-elite structure of later Mughal nobility*

## STRUCTURAL CONCEPT OF ASIAN FRONTIER

Asia and outer Asia into a system of interrelations. By frontier logic the wall is also a corridor and to divide is also to interconnect. Thus the Hindu Kush is to be compared by analogy less to an open or shut gate than to a kind of revolving door whose equal functions in history were to separate, mutually attract and interchange the currents of inner Asia and outer Asia. It was a periodic historical process of separation, encounter and exchange in different spheres of life and thought.

What are some of the conclusions which flow from this conception? Firstly, frontier history, by its very nature, invites us to pay attention to rhythms and symmetries as components of diachronic temporal structures, a still relatively neglected field of application for structural analysis in social and cultural studies. The Hindu Kush of Afghanistan has something important to teach us in this connection. Secondly, we should never forget that a frontier culture is autonomous and not dependent or inferior. It has a life and a message of its own, without which the civilizations on either side of it could be neither separately constituted nor interrelated. Thus Tibet, like Afghanistan, supplies material of supreme value for writing the cultural history of the Asian frontier, as shown by the example of its "combination" of an Indic writing system with a Sino-Tibetan speech system and its interesting consequences for ethnolinguistic research. But this Tibetan "combination" is to be understood as an independent cultural formation, valid on its own, and not as a mere frontier amalgam of prior elements borrowed from India or China.

Thirdly, I want to suggest that the study of Asian frontier history can in its turn throw new light on national history and some of its structural features. The tripartite division and conjunction, Hindustan, Iran and Turan or South, West and Central Asia, postulated by the "no-man's-land" of the Afghans, at some time appeared or reappeared in history within the heart of Delhi. The Hindu Kush truly represented not merely a system of places, and far-away ones, but a system of ideas, habits of thought and life, competition and cooperation, within India itself. I mention here, without particular choice, some observations by historians of India on the later Mughal nobility and its organization, to illustrate the point.

Broadly speaking, the nobles were ranged in two parties. Those who were children of the soil, or had been long domiciled in the country, formed the Hindustani or Indo-Muslim party. To this group belonged the Afghan nobles, the Sayyids of Barha and Khan-i-Dauran, whose ancestors came from Badakhshan. These Indian Muslims depended mostly on the help of their Hindu compatriots. The foreign nobles of diverse origin, opposed as a class to the members of the

Hindustani party, were indiscriminately called Mughals, but they were subdivided into two groups according to the land of their origin. Those who came from 'Transoxiana and other parts of Central Asia, and were mostly of the Sunni persuasion, formed the 'Turani party. The most prominent members of this group were Muhammad Amin Khan and his cousin, Chin Qilich Khan, better known as the Nizam-ul-mulk. The Irani party was composed of those who hailed from the Persian territories and were Shiah. The most important members of the Irani party were Asad Khan and Zu'lfiqar Khan, the king-maker . . . . The nature of the political struggles of the period can be well understood when we note that, during the reigns of Bahadur Shah and Jahandar Shah, the Irani party was in the ascendant under its leader Zu'lfiqar Khan. But from the beginning of Farrukhsiyar's reign (1713 A.D.) the Hindustani party maintained its authority in alliance with the 'Turani group. Then the 'Turani and the Iranians combined to oust the Hindustanis from power.'

Structural analysis will show that all this detail is rendered intelligible when conceived as an ordered system of relations, whose three fundamental axes or dimensions were formed by the unity and opposition of, respectively, (1) "native" and "foreign"; (2) inner Asia and outer Asia; and (3) Muslim and non-Muslim. Such a view interprets or explains simultaneously the fluidity of shifting alliances as well as the fixity of traditional social distinctions among the nobility of the period. Hindu and Hindustani, Mughal, 'Turani and Irani. The unity of the whole system, I think, depended on the unity of Muslim and non-Muslim India and on the wider unity of inner Asia and outer Asia.

I must say that, on the other hand, it explains nothing to my mind to merely describe such events and complain of an unworthy decline into "factions", "self-interest" and "no common principle of action", as some historians of India do, following Sir Jadunath Sarkar.<sup>6</sup>

### III

#### THE MESSAGE OF THE FRONTIER

As I define the term, a true frontier is an autonomous region which represents the conjunction, the unity and the opposition of two or more other regions, such that all of them together form a patterned whole in

<sup>5</sup> Majumdar, Raychandhuri and Datta 1965: 530.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 531.

## STRUCTURAL CONCEPT OF ASIAN FRONTIER

some one or other aspect of society and history. I think that it is totally inadequate to view the frontier as the hem of the garment of civilization, the dependent rim or periphery of a heartland or the mere point of disjunction between other prior regions. Furthermore, it is the essential nature and diachronic rhythm of the frontier to change in time alternately from a firm dividing line into its opposite, a meeting point, and back again. In that historical process the frontier periodically renews itself as well as those on either side of it.

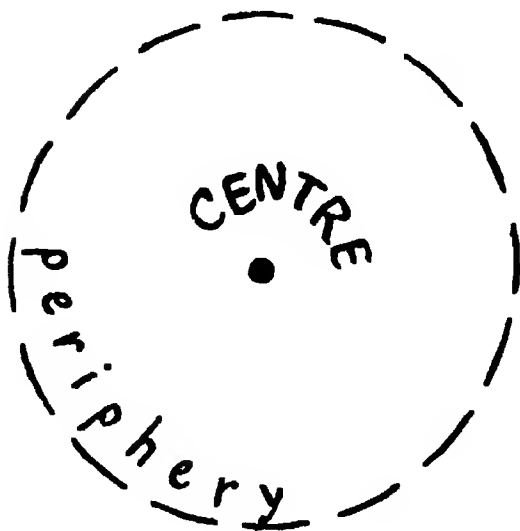


FIG. 2a *Traditional concept of the frontier as periphery*

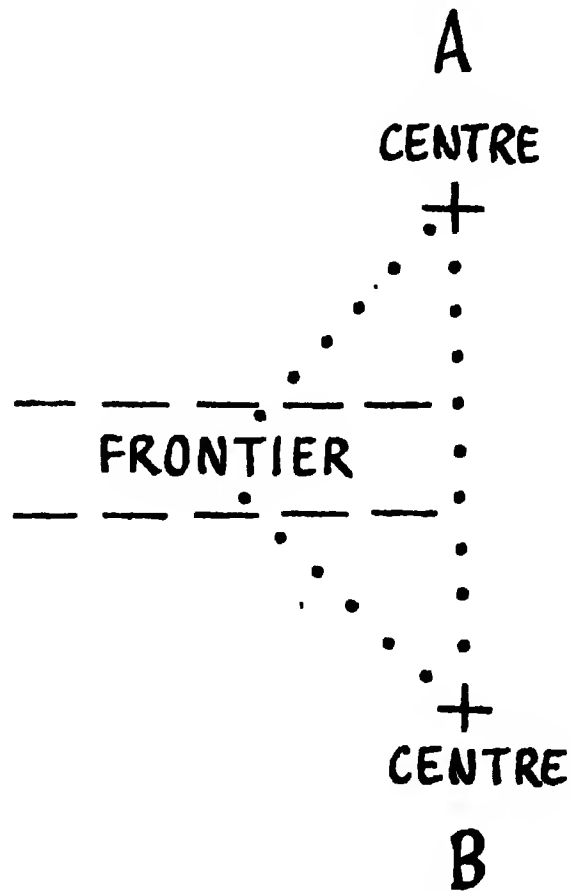


FIG. 2b *Structural concept of the frontier*

These structural attributes, synchronic and diachronic, the Hindu Kush and the whole Asian frontier possessed in full measure and permanently, whether lying under one political authority or between two or more of them, inner Asian and outer Asian. I think that my compilation (1970) of historical references, although sketchy and confined to geopolitical history, shows this to be so for one small structural segment. In one period and one only was the life of the Hindu Kush frontier almost stilled. The so-called "buffer State" of Afghanistan and its "remote mountain fastnesses" were

the purely illusory and forced creations of European imperialism in the nineteenth century A.D.' That condition of misfortune and its attendant miasma of backwardness are of late dispelling over Asia, and the rhythm of the great Asian frontier will resume once again its regular beat.

The anti-imperialist traditions of the Afghans had several times reminded us in India in the past, as the war of Bangladesh does today, that the dominion of one people over another, Western or Eastern, be it disguised under some other name of pacification, law and order, the mission of civilization, the benefits of progress, etc., is an evil to be resisted and overcome. The message of the frontier, now as before, is that it signifies the virtues of liberty and not the disvalues of lawlessness and anarchy as the imperialists often charged. What can be the authentic mission of civilization in our time but to progressively learn and teach how to distinguish order from oppression and liberty from lawlessness? And what better principles can there be for relations among peoples, nations and States, new and old, than the frontier principles of mutuality, reciprocity and exchange?

Meanwhile, so the Hindu Kush story reminds us, our South Asian consciousness, like the wider Asian consciousness, is here to stay since the beginning of history. In retrospect, the epoch of European imperialism was simply an interruption of it.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi, for inviting me to participate in the International Seminar on Afghanistan and India in the Twentieth Century, 1973. I presented this paper to the seminar, which is revised and published here for the first time.

\* I should include British imperialism and Russian imperialism in this.

## REFERENCES

1. BARTHOLD, W. 1962 *Four studies on the history of central Asia*, vol. 3. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
2. BOHANNAN, P. & F. PLOG (eds.). 1967 *Beyond the frontier*. New York: American Museum of Natural History.
3. CURZON, G. N. (LORD). 1907 *Frontiers*. Romanes lecture, Oxford.
4. FRASER-TYTTLER, SIR W. KERR. 1950 *Afghanistan*. London: Oxford University Press.
5. HOLDICHI, SIR THOMAS. 1910 *The gates of India*. London: Macmillan.

#### STRUCTURAL CONCEPT OF ASIAN FRONTIER

6. LATTIMORE, OWEN. 1940 *Inner Asian frontiers of China*. New York: American Geographical Society.  
— 1962 *Studies in frontier history*. London: Oxford University Press.
7. MAJUMDAR, R. C., RAYCHAUDHURI, H. C. & KALIKINKAR DATTA. 1965 *An advanced history of India*, 2nd ed. London: Macmillan.
8. UBEROI, J. P. S. 1970 Between Oxus and Indus. In Amalendu Guha (ed.), *Central Asia*. New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, pp. 182–199.





## **II    ANCIENT   INDIA**



# Cultural Traditions Versus Functional Activities in Stone Age and Other Archaeological Assemblages

H. D. SANKALIA

CONTROVERSY has been raging for the last few years between archaeologists following the older, traditional points of view and those holding modern views (usually young archaeologists) about the significance of change or variability in stone age assemblages. Since this discussion has a great bearing upon the origin and diffusion, not only of the various Stone Age cultures, but also the later Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures in India, this question has been treated at some length here.

The problem is hardly 20 years old. Until 1953 when stone tools or other objects, for instance pottery quite different from that previously known was discovered, it was immediately attributed to a new set of people, who might be racially, ethnically or linguistically different. Thus arose various regional and subregional cultures like the Abbevillian, Clactonian, Aurignacian, in Europe or the Harappan, Jhukar, Jhangar, cultures in the Indian sub-continent. Morphologically and typologically absolutely distinct objects like the cruder stone axes (of quartzite), and the finer polished axes (of basalt or diorite), if found stratigraphically in distinct horizons, were assigned to the Old and New Stone Ages respectively. Thus, for the last 100 years and more, this traditional view about the origins of various cultures has steadily grown, though becoming more and more refined. An important change in this conception was necessitated when Professor Francois Bordes while excavating in the Combe Grenal in the Dordogne, discovered an extremely rich Neanderthal deposit. This deposit had a maximum depth of 40 ft. and was composed of no less than 64 different geological and archaeological layers.

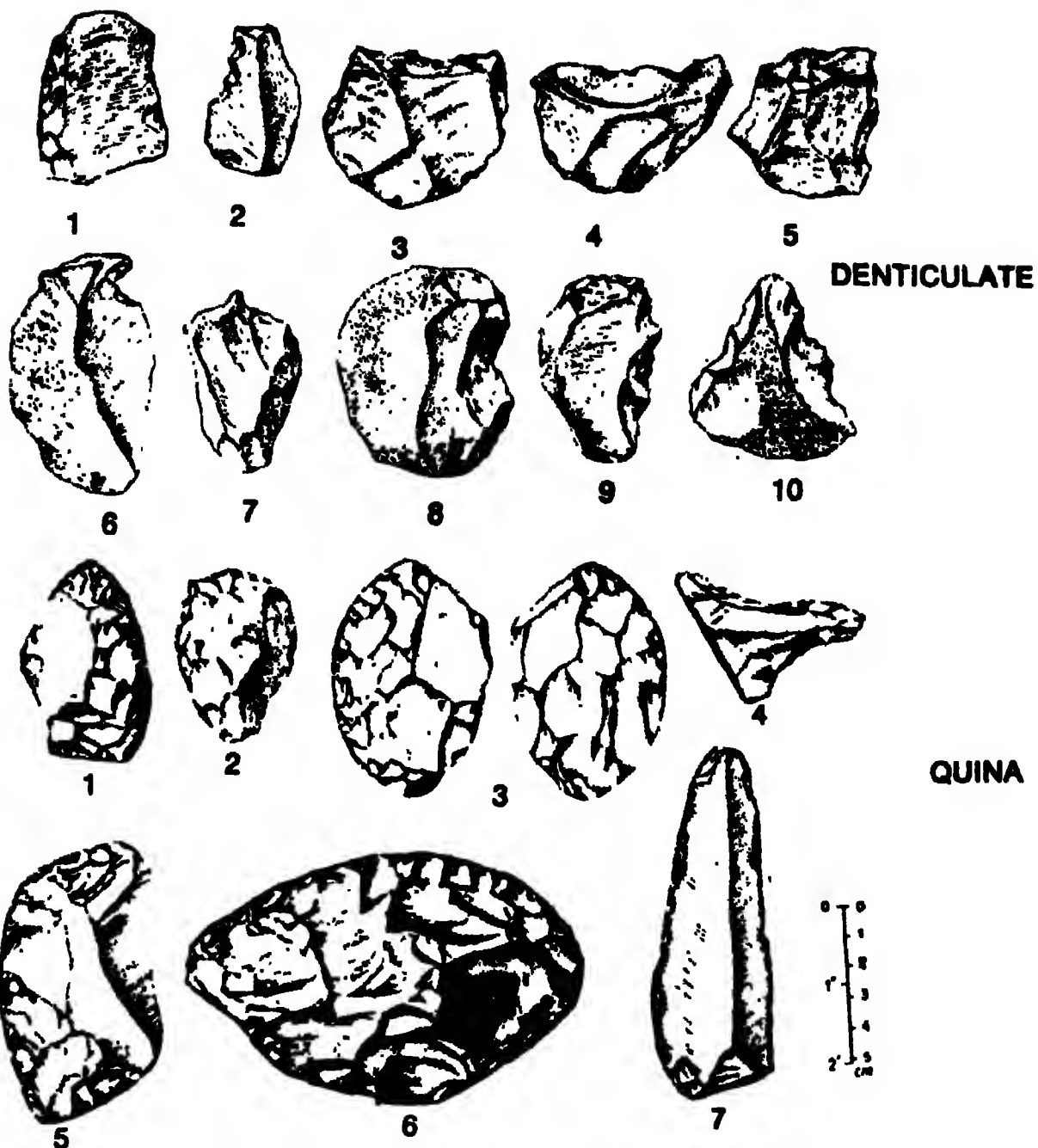
The oldest deposit is geologically dated to about 125,000 years ago, and contains Acheulian hand-axes. But the richest and the most important are the

layers which lie over the Acheulian. These deposits almost invariably contain stone tools, and bones of animals hunted and eaten by the occupants of this cave. Though no human skeletal remains have been so far found, from the nature and type of stone tools, these have been attributed to a Neanderthal people. After the first occupants of that cave left or disappeared, these people came and occupied the cave some 90,000 years ago, and lived on for nearly 50,000 years, with a few breaks, indicated by sterile layers.

During such a long stay, there must have been changes in the climate, fauna and flora, which have been indicated by the study of pollen grains collected from soil samples, and the study of the animal bones. The man should also change physically as well as in his ways of life. Whereas we have no means of knowing the former, the latter may be discerned to some extent. And it is these which have become the chief topic of discussion during the last 20 years. There are some 19,000 stone tools. While classifying these into various types and subtypes, layerwise, that is according to the deposit from which these tools had been carefully collected, Bordes observed that certain layers predominantly contained a particular kind of tool, say scraper, while in another set of layers, only a tool-type called Denticulate, that is saw-like tools, predominated. Thus four distinct groups of tools could be discerned in this vast collection. Bordes attributed this difference to the existence of four cultural traditions among the Neanderthal people. The followers of the "scraper tradition" had little or no relation with, or knowledge of makers of Denticulate tools. Each group had occupied the cave at the time indicated by the occurrence of their tools in the respective layers. Thus each group seems to have preferred to make out its living which primarily was hunting of wild animals, collection of roots and fruits, and fishing with the help of a set of stone tools (the other tools, of bone, wood, etc. have presumably not survived). Whether these Neanderthals were physically different from each other, is not known for want of skeletal remains. But interestingly enough such typological differences or variations have been observed not only at other sites in the Les Eyzies region, but even in other Neanderthal sites in Western Europe, Syria and Palestine, and probably in the Iraqi-Iranian border sites of Shanidar Cave.

What does this widespread and persistent pattern indicate? Ordinarily evolution or a gradual change within the industry would have been postulated, but at many sites, and particularly at Combe Grenal, the tool groups do not appear in any regular sequence, nor can one relate the change in the tool-kit to seasonal or climatic changes (though the view is now postulated by Professor Grahame Clark). The matter would have probably rested at this traditional explanation, had not the young American couple Louis and Sally Binford now come forward with the functional interpretation after

# CULTURAL TRADITIONS VS FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES



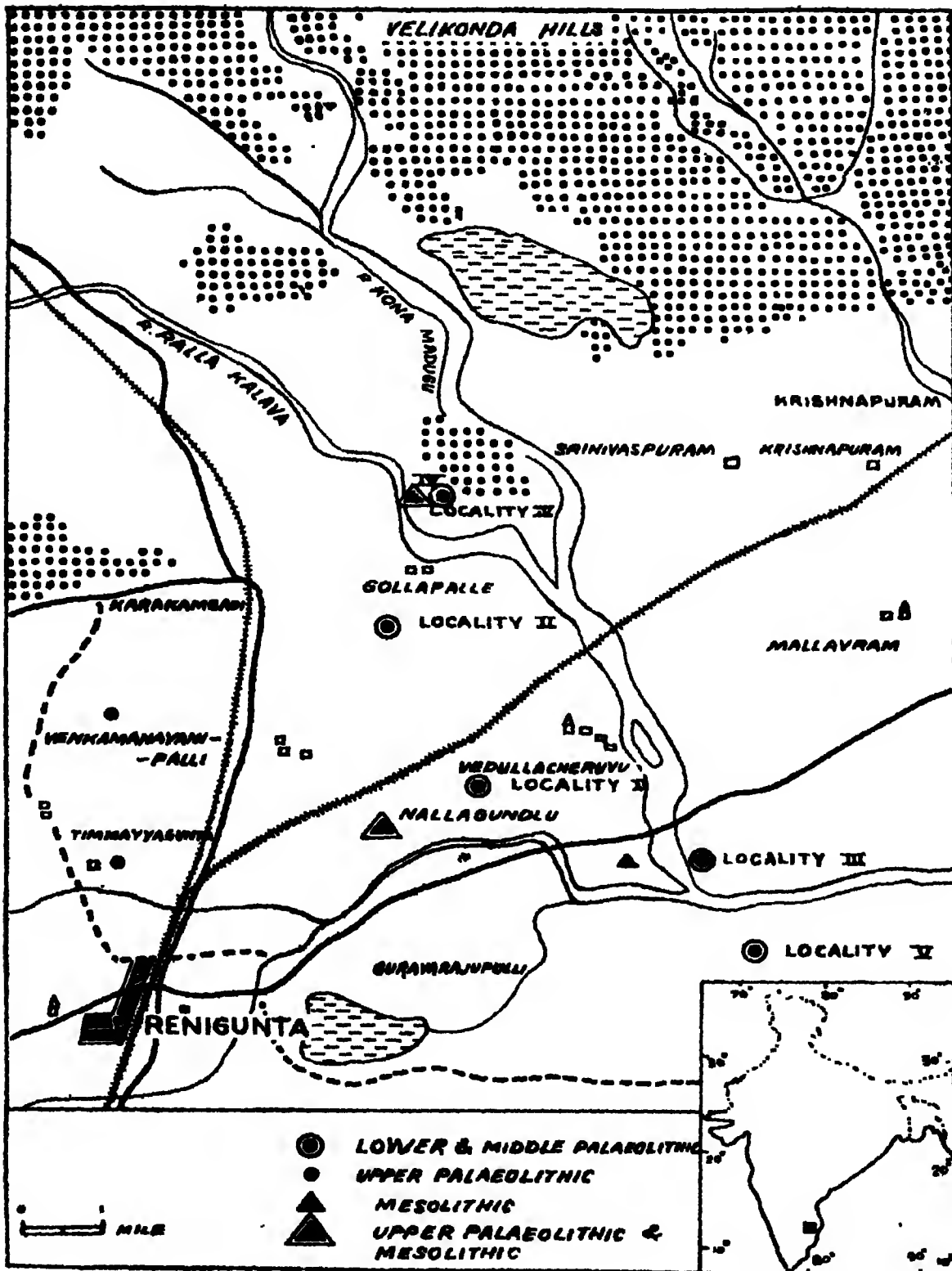
- 1. side scraper
- 2, 3. denticulate tools
- 4, 5, 6. notched tools
- 7. borer
- 8. notched tool
- 9, 10. denticulate tools

- 1. side scraper
- 2. end scraper
- 3. bifacial scraper
- 4. nosed end scraper
- 5. side scraper
- 6. transverse scraper
- 7. retouched blade

Two Neanderthal tool kits: denticulate (top) and Quina (bottom) (Courtesy of François Bordes)

TOOL-BEARING LOCALITIES ON THE RIVER RALLA KALAVA

NEAR RENIGUNTA Dist. Chittoor ( A.P. )



a most exhaustive, painstaking, scientific study of the entire material of Bordes.

Examining each and every piece from the point of view of the raw material, and further measuring it after a set standard, with the help of an electric computer they classified the entire collection into five clusters or factors.

Of course, the Binfords made one initial assumption. Taking the working edge of a tool as a guide, they further assumed (after our present usage of similar edged tools and some ethnographic parallels) that the so-called scrapers of heavy or large type, would be used for scraping the skin, or hide of animals, smaller and lighter ones as spokeshaves, while the fine, knife-like tools would be required for delicate cutting, etc.

By this functional and exhaustive scientific approach, the entire collection of 19,000 tools as well as other collections, were classified into five clusters or factors, and each cluster was further given a specific functional interpretation.

Since this subject is comparatively new in Indian prehistoric studies, the relevant details have been quoted from Pfeiffer (1969).

Factor analysis calls for a detailed investigation among the items of a sample. In this case, the first step was to take one of the tool types, compare it with a second type for each of the sixteen collections and then evaluate the result. A rating +1 would indicate that the two types varied in exactly the same way—that both types increased by, say 10 per cent from collection A to collection B, decreased by, 25 per cent from B to C, maintained the same properties in D, and so on. A-1 would indicate that the two types were exactly out of phase, varying in exactly the opposite way, while 0 would indicate no relationship at all. Intermediate values on the scale from +1 to -1 represented different degrees of correlation or association.

The process was repeated over and over again in the Neanderthal study. Each tool-type was compared successively to every one of the other 99 tool-types and every one of the relationships was evaluated. The final analysis produced five "factors", five sets of tools varied together as independent clusters with a high degree of correlation. The following is a list of the specialised tool kits together with some suggestions as to how they might have been used.

The final analysis produced five "Factors", five sets of tools that varied together as independent clusters with high degrees of correlation. The following is a list of the specialised tool kits together with some suggestions as to how they might have been used:

1. Tool kit I, 12 tool-types including two kinds of borer, a beak-shaped engraver of "bee", and other tools which may have been used to make objects out of wood and bone—perhaps shafts, handles or hafts, tent pegs, and cordage from hides. Maintenance activities.
2. Tool kit II, 10 tool-types including three kinds of spear-point as well as many kinds of scraper. Killing and butchering.
3. Tool kit III, 7 tool-types including three kinds of knife for heavy cutting and three kinds of flakes for delicate cutting. Food-processing, mainly preparing meat.
4. Tool kit IV, 4 tool-types including denticulates for sawing and shredding, and two special types of scrapers for fine work. Shredding and cutting, perhaps of wood and other plant-materials.
5. Tool kit V, 5 tool-types including points, simple scrapers, and the rabot or push-plane. Killing and butchering, but perhaps involving activities more specialized than those requiring tool kit II. (PFEIFFER, pp. 185-186).

This "functional" interpretation would be certainly more meaningful than the old traditional ones. These look very "intelligent" and even



"scientific". One might, as Binfords have proposed, even argue that tools which were made from black flint were made by women, and used in the kitchen, as this material alone was available in the limestone cave, whereas tools of other kinds of flints were made by men while they were away hunting and gathering food.

In spite of considerable personal discussion between Professor Bordes and Binfords, in the field and in the laboratory, the former is not convinced of the functional interpretation. For in the first place, we have not a shred of evidence, as Professor Hallum Movius and others have so often said about the use of the actual function of the tools of the Old Stone Age; whether it be a handaxe, a cleaver, or a well-retouched scraper—of this or that type. The aboriginals of Africa, Australia, New Guinea and such little explored regions did not use such well-made tools. Recently in the hitherto unknown Philippine jungle, a small tribe was found to have no tools/weapons of offence at all. Their only tools were a chopper-like tool tied in a withy, and some flakes.

Hence, Professor Bordes and others have reiterated their opposition to the functional interpretation of Binfords. These are quite significant from our point of view, with the conditions as they are.

The Bordes (1970:61-73) have taken into consideration the various hypotheses about the significance of variability in Palaeolithic assemblages. After examining the hypothesis of (a) Different cultures, (b) Evolution of one type into another, they discuss at great length the "Different activities" hypothesis. Here they reject at the outset the hypothesis that each type of Mousterian assemblage corresponds to one season, because it is known for certain that some caves were occupied all the year round.

With regard to the second aspect of the 'Different specialized activities' hypothesis it is pointed out that:

- (i) in France, sites where only killing and butchering was done as in American prehistory, are almost unknown.
- (ii) Specialized workshops are known, but are rare. Usually fabrication and utilization of the tools took place in the same area.
- (iii) Even if the validity of factor analysis is accepted (in spite of the fact that some methodological objections have been raised), and accept the existence of these factors, their meaning derives from *interpretation*, and this is always open to criticism, unless supported by studies like that of Semenov, and further *combined* with *experimentation*. For instance, a typical burin is to be found in Binfords Factor I, and the typical burin in Factor V. Basically these

are the same type of tool, and distinguished on qualitative grounds only.

- (iv) An analysis (or significance) of what is meant by 'site' would have to be done. For the Palaeolithic period, it is essentially a place (cave, shelter, open station) where numerous tools, animal remains and some evidence of structures such as fire-places, tents, huts, etc. are found. This idea of site changes or grows, as civilization advances, and in the Neolithic and later times an entire village becomes a site.
- (v) Ethnographic comparisons are not always reliable; in fact often dangerous; they do not take into account the differences of environment, say between Southwest France and Kalahari desert.
- (vi) Specialized tool-kits probably corresponding to different activities do occur, but these occur *within a single site*. However Bordes do recognize the advisability of following Binford's method or any other, and find out the differences between open-air sites and caves or shelters, assigned to the same 'culture'.

When we examine the different types of Mousterian industries in a larger perspective, say those of France, and North Africa, we find that the assemblages are very similar, in spite of obvious environmental differences. These similarities cannot be explained except on the ground of similar cultural traditions. Hence the Bordes conclude by saying that different Mousterian types represent different cultures or traditions. These, though not immutable, certainly lasted for a long time. They further ask, "that" if the same activities were being performed in a different way, then may we ask the following question: "since there are several ways of performing the same activities with different tool-kits, why not admit that the different Mousterian types just represent these different ways, and that the difference is cultural?" (Bordes, 1970, 1973).

Bordes' point of view is further supported by D. M. Collins (1970: 17: 27) who undertook an elaborate analysis of the various Clactonian and Acheulian collections in Western Europe after devising a specific artifact-type measurement. He prefers the cultural traditional interpretation to the functional, and further suggests the possibility of establishing a series of stages in these traditions. Collins' more exhaustive paper on this subject was generally well received by traditionalists like Movius, Narr and others, but criticized by L. and S. Binford (*ibid*).

Similar views are also expressed by P. A. Mellars (1970: 74-89). In his paper "Some Comments on the notion of 'functional variability in stone tool assemblages'" he raised serious objections from several points of view—

chronological, typological, economic—to the exclusively functional interpretation of Binfords. He further points out the difficulties of adequately 'testing' hypotheses concerning this kind of patterning, such as assemblages of types A and B manufactured by a single social group are virtually incapable of being positively refuted by any kind of archaeological evidence. Mellars further lists some eight points on which it is necessary to get much fuller information. Unless this information is obtained "the prospects of adequately testing any of the current hypotheses concerning functional variability in Palaeolithic and Mesolithic assemblages will remain extremely limited."

We shall not pursue the matter further, but would like to consider the position in a few recently explored sites in India, and see what inferences or conclusions we should draw about the cultural tradition *vis-a-vis* the functional interpretation.

Only two sites are examined, one is in the Deccan, the other in Central India (Madhya Pradesh).

Not far from the famous pilgrimage centre of Tirupati and the railway junction of Renigunta on the Southern Railway, there flow two small streams. They are known as the Rallakalava and the Konamadugu. These rise in the Tirupati hills and after a short run of a few miles, meet the major stream of the Chittor District, *viz.* the river Swarnanukhi. The bed of the river is sandy, but the small streams are full of large and small boulders, apparently washed down from the adjoining hills, and also redeposited by the streams during a phase of aggradation. Though the banks of these streams are not high, a careful examination reveals that this kind of colluvial and alluvial activity or erosion and aggradation had taken place at least twice, and each time the streams had deposited a slightly different load on its previously eroded bank.

A careful search spread over several seasons revealed the existence of four distinct industries or assemblages. (See Figs 2-3)

- A. Hand-axe Industry on quartzite
- B. Scraper Point Borer Industry on chert
- C. Blade and Burin Industries on fresh greenish quartzite
- D. Microlithic Industry on milky quartzite.

Their typological, physical and chronological order, particularly of the last two, found on ancient terraces were a little away from the present bed of streams.

The significant thing which is important from the point of view of ecological, and functional interpretation is, that unlike the Near East, or South-west France where we might separate the Mousterian industries site-wise, as those found in caves and rock-shelters and those found on open-

air sites, all these four industries at Renigunta are found in one and the same environment or ecological zone.

At present, this region is fairly well-wooded, and receives a moderate rainfall. The game is not plentiful, but formerly might have had a fauna which included the elephant, buffalo, pig, goat/sheep, etc. The streams still supply fish, which are caught by the fishermen even today.

Among the flora one can include various varieties of banana, but whether these grew in Palaeolithic times or not is difficult to say.

Thus it would seem, though it is impossible to make a categorical assertion, that the environment in this region (or for that matter in many parts of India) has not changed (much) from our Palaeolithic sub-phase to another. If we accept this proposition we have to say that the various Stone Age populations had to depend for their subsistence on the same kind of animal, and vegetable food. But each of this group of people seems to have exploited with different kinds of tools from age to age. That is, the activities remained the same, but were done differently. There is not much scope for seasonal variation, as argued by Professor Grahame Clark in his paper on "Bio-archaeology" (1973: 469). For unlike southwestern Europe, in India there are no marked seasonal variations, particularly in South India.

Now the problem is an age-old one. How was the change in the tools brought about? Was it an indigenous development or evolution from the handaxes to small points and scrapers and from the latter to blades and burins, and from those to microliths? There was also change in the raw-material—from industry to industry. Even if one might evolve the small microlithic blades from the antecedent thick blades of greenish quartzite, one has to account for the change in raw material. Why is this preference for agate, chalcedony and silicete material, when excellent fine-grained quartzite, which was known to have yielded true blades of all kinds abounded? The true explanation seems to be that for some reasons, earlier cultural tradition has been lost or forgotten and a newer introduced or adopted, though the life of the man *essentially* remained the same (that is hunter-fisher and collector of wild grains and fruits and roots), and though again, this man performed the same function of butchering, cutting and scraping, but with different types of tools.

While this is a kind of queer conclusion one can draw for many regions of India, and that of the Old World, there are two specific spots, *not regions*, where excavations have yielded comparable data. These are rock-shelters at Adamgarh and the cave at Bhimbetka, both in Madhya Pradesh. The rock-shelter at Adamgarh was dug by Dr. R. V. Joshi in 1961-62 (1966: pp. 150-163) and that at Bhimbetka is being dug for the last three seasons by Dr. V. N. Misra.

At none of these sites can one think of major environmental change. The former is a natural exposure in a sandstone outcrop not far from the Narbada at Hoshangabad, the latter one of the numerous natural caves and rock-shelters on the Vindhya sandstone-plateau.

Adamgarh hill and its surroundings are now completely devoid of forest vegetations, though in the remote past, there is likely to have been a good vegetation cover. Bhimbetka hill and its surroundings are, on the other hand, thickly wooded. Among the animals still frequenting the area are sambar, nilgai, sloth bear, panther, fox, wolf, jackal, etc. The locality is rich in wild vegetable foods like mahua, achar, etc. which are collected extensively for food by the local populace, specially in summer months. There are also several perennial springs near the site which supply the water needs of the human as well as animal—wild and domesticated—communities. Though some changes must have taken place in the thickness or thinness of vegetation, and the availability of the game and forest produce from age to age, there never was a fundamental change to necessitate a corresponding change in the tool-kit and this seems to have taken place independently of small environmental changes. To what shall we attribute these technological changes if not to change in the cultural traditions? Cultural traditions change because of the new cultural influences, contacts or because the people themselves are different racially or culturally. Unfortunately we have no means to document any of these factors.

## REFERENCES

1. BINFORD, L. R., AND BINFORD, S. R. 1966. "A Preliminary analysis of functional variability in the Mousterian of Levallois facies". *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 68, 2 (pl. 2), pp. 238-95.
2. BORDES, FRANCOIS AND DE SONNEVILLE-BORDES, DENISE, 1970. "The significance of Variability in Palaeolithic assemblages". *World Archaeology*, Vol. 2, pp. 61-73.
3. BORDES, F. 1959. "Evolution in Palaeolithic Cultures". In *Evolution after Darwin* ed. S. Tax. Chicago.
4. BORDES, F. 1961. "Mousterian Cultures in France". *Science*, Vol. 134, pp. 803-10.
5. CLARK, GRAHAME. 1973. "Bio-archaeology". *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 14, p. 469.
6. COLLINS, D. M. 1969. "Culture traditions and environment of early man". *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 10, pp. 267-316.
7. COLLINS, DESMOND, 1970. "Stone artefact analysis and the recognition of culture traditions". *World Archaeology*, Vol. 2, pp. 17-27.

#### CULTURAL TRADITIONS VS FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

8. JOSHI, R. V. 1966. "Acheulian Succession in Central India". *Asian Perspectives*, Vol. VIII (1964), pp. 150-163.
9. JOSHI, R. V. 1970. "Significance of Cleavers in Indian Acheulian industries". *Archéocivilisations Nouvelle Series*, Nos. 7-8 (1966-1970), pp. 39-46.
10. MELLARS, PAUL. 1970. "Some comments on the notion of 'functional variability' in stone-tool assemblages". *World Archaeology*, Vol. 2, pp. 74-89.
11. MURTY, M. L. K. 1970. "Blade-and-Burin and Late Stone Industries around Renigunta". *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. IV, pp. 106-128.
12. MURTY, M. L. K. 1969. *Stone Age Cultures of Chittoor District*. Ph. D. thesis. Unpublished. Deccan College and Poona University Libraries.
13. PFEIFFER, JOHN, E. 1969. *The Emergence of Man*. New York/London.



# Seals as an Evidence of Indus-West Asia Interrelations

DILIP K CHAKRABARTI

THE purpose of this paper is to discuss systematically the evidence of seals as an item of the Indus-West Asia interrelations. The seals will be treated just as any other category of prehistoric objects. No detailed reference will be made to the typology and other details of the inscriptions which some of them possess. The discussion may be arranged in two main sections with several possible sub-sections. First, one may enumerate and discuss the Indus or Indus-type seals that have been found in different regions of West Asia i.e., Mesopotamia, Iran, the Persian gulf and Syria. Secondly, one may analyse the Indus context for possible West Asiatic seal-types and associated analogies. There has been no systematic and more or less exhaustive discussion of this theme so far. The only example one can think of, besides C. J. Gadd's paper on the evidence from Ur (Gadd, 1932) and R. E. M. Wheeler's necessarily brief treatment of the subject in *The Indus Civilization* (Wheeler, 1968, pp. 117-118), is the discussion by E. C. I. During-Caspers primarily in the second chapter of her London Ph.D. dissertation—*Archaeological Evidence for Maritime Trade in the Persian Gulf in the Third Millennium B.C.* (During-Caspers, 1969). The present author differs from During-Caspers both in the treatment of data and in several other details.

## I. INDUS AND INDUS-TYPE SEALS IN WEST ASIA

### A. MESOPOTAMIA

In 1936 Simone Corbiau (1936) pointed out the Indus significance of a cylinder seal, probably from Mesopotamia, which was published in 1888 by De Clercq (1888, p. 40, Pl. III, No. 26). The first Indus or Indus-type seal to have come from a known provenance and context in Mesopotamia was from Kish in 1923. This was published by E. J. Mackay in 1925 (Mackay,



1925). In 1925 F. Thureau-Dangin (1925) published a seal of unknown provenance which, according to the dealer from whom it was bought, came from Tello or ancient Lagash. He also drew attention to one more seal of this type in the Louvre collection, which again was supposed to have come from Lagash. This must be the seal which was first published by Ernest de Sarzec and Leon Heuzey (1884-1912, pp. 321-322, Pl. 30, nos. 3a and 3b) and subsequently reproduced by Louis Delaporte (1920, p. 3, Pl. 2, nos 8a and 8b). Also in 1925 V. Scheil (1925) reported a seal having an impression of cloth on the other side of the piece of clay. This also came from a dealer who said that it came from Jokha or ancient Umma. In 1929-30 H. D. Genouillac (1930, p. 177) in his second season of excavations at Lagash found another seal which was briefly reported by him in 1930. In 1936 he referred to it again (Genouillac, 1936, vol II, p. 83). In 1931 S. Langdon (1931) published a seal from Kish, found in Watelin's excavations at the site. Langdon (1932) mentioned another seal in the collection of Professor A. B. Cook of Cambridge who got it from a dealer. Though the provenance is unknown, it is probable that this steatite button seal came from somewhere in Mesopotamia. In 1932 Gadd (1932) published his study of 18 "seals of ancient Indian style found at Ur". Some of them were earlier mentioned by C. L. Woolley (cf. 1928, p. 26, Pl. XI, 2; 1931, p. 357; 1932, pp. 163-164). The seals from the Royal Cemetery were again published by him in 1934 (Woolley, 1934) while those from the other areas of Ur were re-listed by L. Legrain (1951) on the basis of Gadd's earlier listing. The seals which figured in Gadd but had no excavation number on them were left out of Woolley's and Legrain's discussions. Woolley, however, seemed to have attached considerable significance to a seal (no. 9 in Woolley, 1934) from the Royal Cemetery, which did not figure in Gadd. In 1933 H. Frankfort (1933, pp. 50-53) referred to a cylinder seal of Indus affinity in a fixed context at Tell Asmar (ancient Eshunna). In the same context at Tell Asmar there was another Indus-type stamp seal with incised concentric squares on the stamping surface. In 1935 E. A. Speiser (1935, p. 82, Pl. XXXVII, b) published a similar specimen from Tepe Gawra. There is no way of saying that the seal published by Von Bissing (1927) came from Mesopotamia. That was acquired from a dealer in Cairo. The provenance of the seal published in the *British Museum Quarterly* (1932) is unknown, but it was bought in Baghdad and is of round variety. This may come from somewhere in Mesopotamia. The seal illustrated by Ananda Coomaraswamy in 1929 (Coomaraswamy, 1929) is a typical Indus specimen and came from a coin-dealer in the Punjab in 1910 or 1912.

Out of the above-mentioned publications one can easily single out the following sites: Ur, Tell Asmar, Kish, Lagash and Tepe Gawra. The Indus

or Indus-type seals from all these sites deserve detailed consideration. All the other finds are basically without any context. Possibly only three of them may be included in the present discussion—the one illustrated by Corbier (1936), the one in Professor Cook's collection published by Langdon (1931) and the one published in 1932 in the *British Museum Quarterly*. They are significant, because they are not typically Indus and correspond to the mixed types known from Tell Asmar and Ur. Corbier's "Indo-Sumerian" cylinder seal is equated with the Tell Asmar find while the round button-boss variety of the other two is a common enough variety at Ur. There is no way of assigning the rest of the sporadic finds to any Mesopotamian provenance because they are typical Indus seals and could have come from anywhere, including the Indus valley.

### Ur

Gadd's "seals of ancient Indian style found at Ur" still remains a classic discussion on the theme. Out of his 18 seals nos. 8–14 belong unmistakably to a type of Persian Gulf seals (type III of Buchanan, 1965) and thus do not merit any discussion in the present context.

Gadd no. 1 (no. 631 in Legrain, 1951): excavation no. U 7683; it was found in 1926–27 "on the surface of the soil some distance to the east of Ur" and was mentioned by Woolley in 1928 (Woolley, 1928, p. 26). The shape is rectangular though one should note that the corners are somewhat rounded quite unlike any Harappan specimen. The central part of the back is shaped into a rounded ridge which is lengthwise perforated. The material is grey steatite and the measurement  $1\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{1}{8} \times \frac{1}{8}$  ins. A horned but humpless bull faces left on the impression; there is no manger in front but there is a trace of belly-bands. The inscription above the bull, divided from it by a narrow ridge, may read, according to Gadd, *Sag-Ku-Si* which is neither a Sumerian nor an Akkadian name.

There is nothing to connect this with the Indus valley except perhaps its general rectangular shape and a bull on the face. In 1928 Woolley (1928, p. 26) called it "an object of extraordinary importance" because this, according to him, gave the first evidence of dating of the similar Indian material. This seems to be an exaggerated opinion. All that one can say, as Gadd has said, that this may be an adaptation from the Harappan type either at Ur or at a place "under the influence both of the Indus and of the Sumerian civilization".

Gadd no. 2: the context is unknown, though it is said to have been found in 1928–29. It bears only the British Museum registration number and was later left out of discussion by Woolley. The material is steatite, "regular light flaky steatite of the Indus seals, with the highly glazed white surface

that looks like enamel". It is a round seal, found partly broken on one side; the diameter is 1 inch and the height or thickness  $\frac{2}{8}$  inch. On the back there is a prominent button boss, deeply grooved in one direction and pierced in the other. The bull on the face, unmistakably an Indus one, faces right with lowered head and there are 5 Indus pictographs above. In material, style of the bull and inscription this is remarkably close to the Indus.

Gadd no. 3 (no. 629 in Legrain, 1951): excavation no. U17342; found in 1930-31 without any archaeological context. The material is greenish-grey steatite and the measurement is 1 inch (diameter)  $\times$   $\frac{5}{8}$  inch (thickness). It is mostly broken but the round button shape is clear and so are the Indus pictographs.

Gadd no. 4: only the British Museum registration number; found in 1930-31 without any context. The material is steatite and it measures  $\frac{7}{8} \times \frac{1}{8}$  inch. It is only a fragment but more of the back than of the face is preserved. Round button shape; Indus pictographs.

Gadd no. 5 (no. 630 in Legrain, 1951): excavation no. U 17341; found in 1930-31, again without any context and found broken; only the lower half of the face survives. Measurement  $1 \times \frac{1}{2}$  inch; material brownish-grey steatite; round, button-shaped; no pictograph is visible in the surviving portion but the animal seems to be a bull with pointed tail, reminiscent of the Indus type.

Gadd no. 6 (no. 632 in Legrain, 1951): excavation no. is not mentioned; found in 1930-31; first mentioned by Woolley (1931, p. 357); discovered in a vaulted tomb described by Woolley (*ibid*) as a Larsa tomb which had been hacked down into the northwest jamb of the door to room 4 in the northwest annexe of Bur-Sin, the third king of the Third Dynasty of Ur. This is a cylinder seal of "some white stone, perforated in the usual way, and having at each end grooves with the outer edges nicked, probably to be fitted with metal caps, as we see also upon those found at Susa and at Tell Asmar" (Gadd, 1932, p. 196). The distinctive feature of the design is a humped bull which faces a palm tree and has below its face a star-shaped object which has been interpreted as a "round manger, or perhaps a bundle of fodder". Behind the bull are a scorpion and 2 (?) snakes and above this assemblage is possibly a human figure which has been placed horizontally and is with very long arms and legs and rays (?) about his head. The bull on this seal is distinctively Indian, and though the cylinder seal itself is likely of non-Indus manufacture, it is under Indus influence.

Gadd no. 7: excavation no. U 11958; discussed by Woolley in *Ur Excavations*, II (*The Royal Cemetery*) among the seals "assigned on internal evidence to the Sargonic period" (no. 367 in Woolley, 1934, p. 363, Pl. 215). Though it comes from the Royal Cemetery, its specific context is not men-

tioned by Woolley. The seal itself is a cylinder seal, made of white shell and measuring  $17 \times 9$  mm. The central place in the design is occupied by a palm tree and on its either side is a humpless bull shown with a single horn. The one on the left faces the tree but the one on the right has its back towards the tree. Two unidentified objects above the bull may just be the tops of two palm trees. Below them are two partly cross-hatched objects or symbols which look like the fish symbol of the script. Though Woolley (1934, p. 363) calls it "an unmistakable character of the Indus script" one is by no means sure.

Gadd no. 15 (no. 370 in Woolley, 1934): excavation no. U 8685. It comes from Private Grave 401 at a depth of .9 m. from the surface and is associated with a pair of gold ear-rings and a number of beads of lapis lazuli, carnelian, steatite and copper. It is a round seal of grey steatite with a diameter of  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch and is listed by Woolley (1934, p. 363) among the seals of the Sargonic period. It shows a double-horned bull (humped?) facing right and above is a number of crowded symbols or pictographs whose Harappan character is not beyond doubt.

Gadd no. 16 (no. 285 in Woolley, 1934): excavation no. U 17649. It comes from the Private Grave 1847 which is a square pit with various burials at different levels, and though various objects have been found in this pit nothing else has any Harappan affinity. The grave is placed in the Second Dynasty of Ur by Woolley (1934, p. 356) but Frankfort (1939, p. 306, n. 2) has placed it in the Akkadian period. According to Buchanan (1954) this should belong to the post-Akkadian-Third Dynasty time range. The seal measures  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch in diameter and is of glazed grey steatite. The bull which faces right is unmistakably Indus and so are the four pictographs above. There is a button-shaped perforated boss on the back, which is incised by a single line along its length.

There is no information regarding the provenance of Gadd nos. 17 and 18 and these may be left out of consideration.

Considerable significance has been attached by Woolley (1934, p. 568, Pl. 192) to his seal no. 9 (excavation no. U11181) discovered in Private Grave no. 791 in the Royal Cemetery. This grave, according to him, is pre-dynastic, "clearly dated by external evidence to the time of Shub-ad". It is a rectangular stamp seal of dark steatite ( $14 \times 11$  mm). All that it bears on the face is a scorpion and a sign of writing. One wonders why Woolley attached so much importance to it. He thought that it dated "the use of the ancient Indian script and commercial relations between Mesopotamia and the Indus valley" to the pre-dynastic phase of Ur. First, there is no sign of any Harappan pictograph on this seal. Secondly, scorpion is by no means a characteristic of the Harappan seals. It, of course, differs from

the normal pattern of the Mesopotamian seals because it is a rectangular stamp seal.

Woolley (1934) also remarked on the probable Indus significance of two other seals from the Royal Cemetery. On seal 77 (excavation no. U 12087), a backed clay cylinder measuring  $31 \times 14$  mm, there are roughly cut crosslines which perhaps represent a reed hut and water carrier "like pictograph 190 of the old Indian script" (Woolley, 1934, p. 342, Pl. 199). This is supposed to come from the earlier part of the Royal Cemetery period. Seal 259 (excavation no. U 11462), a dark steatite cylinder measuring  $18 \times 10$  mm, depicts a seated woman and servant, both holding pointed objects—arrowheads or daggers. Three similar points in the depicted field are, according to him, "not unlike a sign of the Indus script of Mohenjodaro (no. 119)". This seal is supposed to belong to the later part of the Royal Cemetery (Woolley, 1934, p. 355, Pl. 210).

A number of points deserve attention in the context of these seals from Ur. First, as has already been pointed out, out of Gadd's 18 seals, seven, nos. 8–14 do not have anything Indus about them; they belong to a distinct Persian Gulf variety. Nos. 17 and 18 are without any known provenance; they may or may not be from Ur. Of the remaining nine, nos. 2, 3, 4, 16 can at once be related to the Indus civilization as they all unmistakably bear Harappan script. No. 5 may belong to this category but the seal survives only in fragment. No. 6, though a cylinder seal, bears a humped bull which has its eyes rendered in Kulli fashion. It may be under Indus influence. Apart from the so-called cross-hatched fish sign there is nothing Harappan in No. 7; the humpless bulls are reminiscent of the Indus types only in the vaguest way. The surface design on no. 15 is too crowded to suggest anything distinctively Harappan, though the overall impression is that it is under the Harappan influence. As far as no. 1 is concerned, apart from a general rectangular shape there is nothing specifically Harappan; one is hard put to find an analogy for its bull in a typical Harappan specimen.

Secondly, with the exceptions of nos. 1, 6 and 7 all the relevant seals illustrated by Gadd belong to the round variety. The number of round seals in the Harappan context is very much limited, only about 5 (Marshall, 1931, nos. 309, 383, 478; Mackay, 1938, no. 500; Mackay, 1943, no. 28), suggesting that they formed an intrusive element in the general range of Harappan seals. Considering the general round shape of the Persian Gulf seals and the intrusive character of the round shape among the seals of the Harappan civilization proper, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that all the round varieties of the so-called "seals of ancient Indian style" at Ur were specifically meant for the Indus-Persian Gulf-Mesopotamia trade.

Thirdly, as far as the chronological range is concerned these seals do not

tell much. Only four of them come from any specific context: Gadd no. 16 (Larsa period?), no. 7 (Sargonic period) and no. 16 (post-Akkadian to the Third Dynasty, according to Buchanan, 1954). While discussing the chronological significance of Gadd's seals Wheeler (1968, p. 118) also refers to Gadd no. 12 which comes from "upper rubbish, Kassite (?) level". He himself calls it very dubious stratigraphy but the point is that this particular seal is unmistakably a Persian Gulf one and thus should not come at all in any discussion on the chronology of the Harappan civilization. The same may be said about the Persian Gulf seal dated to the tenth year of Gungunum of Larsa (Hallo and Buchanan, 1965; Buchanan, 1965). Nobody can say that the Persian Gulf seals were manufactured and used only for their Harappan connection. If not, the dating of a specifically Persian Gulf type does not really affect the dating of the Harappan civilization.

Finally, one may take note of the fact that no typical Harappan seal has been found at Ur.

### *Kish*

The seal from Kish which was illustrated by Mackay (1925) came from the Oxford and Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago) excavations at the site in 1923. The seal was not mentioned in Langdon's (1924) report on the excavations at the site in that year. It measures 30 x 30 mm with a thickness of 8 mm (including the broken boss at the back). The edges of the obverse are badly damaged and though the boss is broken one can make out that it was originally perforated. A new hole was cut through the original boss thus suggesting that the seal was re-used even after the boss got broken. The material is steatite, glazed white. Mackay (1925) suggests that the original glaze coating was blue. There is unmistakably an Indus bull on the face with a manger below his neck. There are three (?) distinct Indus pictographs above. This is a typical Indus seal.

The stratigraphic context is somewhat dubious. It was found "in the foundations of a chamber at a depth of nearly 2 metres below the surface of the ground on the northeast side of the Ziggurat or temple tower, of the war-god Ilbaba, the mound locally known as Tell Ahaimar" (Mackay, 1925, p. 697). It was obviously earlier than the chamber and Mackay calls it "early Sumerian". Subsequently Langdon (1931, p. 593) wrote that the chamber was beneath a pavement of Samsu-iluna whose general date is 1749-1712 B.C. So the seal is decidedly earlier than the 18th century B.C. but how much earlier it is not possible to say.

The second seal from Kish was discovered in 1930-31, again in the Oxford and Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago) excavations at the site. Watelin (1934) does not mention this in his report on the excavations of that

year. This also is a typical steatite rectangular Indus seal which bears on the surface a bull before a manger with 9 pictographs above. Stratigraphy is again confusing. Langdon (1931) called it "pre-Sargonic" but at the same time pointed out that "it was found with a stone pommel bearing an inscription clearly not earlier than Sargon of Agade". One may accept it as Sargonic. Thus, of the two seals from Kish one is Sargonic and the other earlier (possibly by a considerable margin) than the second king of the First Dynasty of Babylon. Secondly, both of them are typical Indus seals and if they were used for trade it is likely that the trade in this case called for the use of Indus seals themselves. One cannot postulate any intermediary here. It may be added that another seal of this type from Kish is supposed to be in the Baghdad Museum (personal information from J. N. Postgate) but as there is no published evidence one has to ignore it in the present context.

### *Lagash*

A round seal with button boss (perforated and with two incisions across) bearing an Indus bull with lowered head and 5 Indus pictographs was reported from Lagash, first by Sarzec and Heuzey (1884-1912, pp. 321-322, Pl. 30, nos. 3a and 3b), and subsequently by Delaporte (1920, p. 3, Pl. 2, nos. 8a and 8b). Of the two illustrations of this seal that in Sarzec and Heuzey is better. The measurement is 13 mm (diameter)  $\times$  4 mm (thickness) and the material a soft grey greenish stone. The find is unstratified. It closely resembles Gadd nos. 16 and 17 from Ur.

A second seal from Lagash, this time in the context of the Larsa period, was made by Genouillac (1930, p. 177) and further mentioned by him in 1936 (Genouillac, 1936, vol. II, p. 83). This is a rectangular seal with only two signs of the Indus script.

### *Tell Asmar*

A cylinder seal with Indus motif was reported from Tell Asmar by Frankfort in 1933 (Frankfort, 1933, pp. 50-53). He also discussed it in 1934 (Frankfort, 1934, pp. 3-5), 1939 (Frankfort, 1939, pp. 304-307) and 1955 (Frankfort, 1955, pp. 45-46). This occurred in a clear Akkadian context along with a few other Harappan objects—etched carnelian beads, pottery decorated in barbotine technique, heart-shaped bone inlays and an uninscribed alabaster stamp seal with concentric square designs. The material is glazed grey steatite. The component elements of the design are an elephant and a rhinoceros standing in a line, as if in a procession, with a crocodile above. The design appears on a Mohenjodaro seal which Frankfort illustrates for comparison (1933). The Mohenjodaro seal in question is no. 14 in Marshall, 1931, Pl. CXVI. Even the treatment of animals is in the Indus fashion. It

is worth quoting Frankfort in detail (1933, p. 52): "The animals, foreign to the Babylonians were obviously carved by an artist to whom they were familiar, as appears from the faithful rendering of such details as the skin of the rhinoceros (which resembles plate-armor more closely than does the skin of his companion) and the sloping back and bulbous forehead of the elephant. Certain peculiarities of style connect the seal as definitely with the Indus civilization as if it actually bore the signs of the Indus script. Such is the convention in which the feet of the elephant are rendered. A peculiar network of lines such as appears on the elephant's ear in the Indian seal extends over the whole of his head and trunk in the Tell Asmar cylinder. The way in which the ears of the rhinoceros seem to be implanted on two little stems is also a feature connecting our cylinder with the Indus valley seal."

The second specimen from the same context was an alabaster square (measurement not mentioned) stamp seal with a pierced cylindrical knob on the back. It bears concentric squares as the design. A noticeable feature is that the outermost square is formed by a bead-design, an element not present in the Mohenjodaro specimen illustrated by Frankfort (1933). But otherwise, a square stamp seal with a design of concentric squares is at home in the Indus valley (Marshall, 1931, Pl. CXIV, 516; Vats, 1944, Pl. XCV, 395).

### *Tepe Gawra*

In 1935 Speiser (1935, p. 82, Pl. XXXVI, b) published a terracotta rectangular stamp seal with three concentric rectangles as design and a perforated boss on the back from Tepe Gawra VI which extends to the beginning of the Sargonic period. The seal may thus be Sargonic or even somewhat earlier. Its measurement is 54 × 45 mm. Speiser (1935, p. 82) himself pointed out that both the shape and design recalled an Indus valley seal, though he added that it might in this instance be a simple cake mould.

### *Seals of Unknown Provenance but Probably from Mesopotamia*

The number of finds without any fixed provenance is six (De Clercq, 1888, p. 40; Thureau-Dangin, 1925; Scheil, 1925; Langdon, 1932; Von Bissing, 1927; *British Museum Quarterly*, 1932). As has been pointed out, all the finds except three are typical Indus specimens, collected mostly from dealers. They could have come from anywhere, including the Indus valley. Only in three cases there is something which ties them up with Mesopotamia or strictly speaking, the general setting of West Asia.

The first specimen in question is a cylinder seal the Indus significance of which was pointed out by Corbier (1936). The material of the seal is described as greenish white agate. There are two panels of designs divided



roughly from each other by a line. In the upper panel the central feature is a man with long headdress with a dragon-like creature on either side. This particular piece of composition seems to be held up by some sort of support and is flanked by two trees, the right one of which differs in its treatment of leaves from the left one. At the foot of these trees there is a typical Indus fish sign. There is a human figure apparently struggling with two mythical creatures on either side at each end of the panel. In each case, above the right shoulder of the human figure there is a representation of a tree. In the lower panel two bulls are sniffing at a crescentic or round object. To the right of this central grouping there is a horned mythical animal with up-turned face, followed by a rhinoceros bearing upon its back a beaked bird with outstretched wings. The same composition is on the left but on this side the mythical animal comes after the rhinoceros bearing a bird. A number of Indus features can be easily noticed on this seal: the fish sign, the way in which the eyes of the animals is drawn (During-Caspers, 1969, would, however, link it with the Persian gulf) and the depiction of the mythical creatures which occur in the Indus context also (even in this case a Persian gulf analogy cannot be ruled out, cf. Bibby, 1970, p. 278 for a sort of horned dragon). Moreover, there is almost an exact correspondence between the headdress of the man in the upper panel and that of a figure scratched on a terracotta cake from Kalibangan, though in the latter case the lowest part of the headdress is missing (Rao, 1973, Pl. XXXVI, c.).

The second example was published by Langdon (1932). It is a round seal with button boss closely resembling Gadd nos. 16 and 17 from Ur. A horned but humpless bull stands below 5 Indus pictographs. Neither the material nor the measurement is mentioned. One may place the round seal with clumsily copied Indus characters in the *British Museum Quarterly* (1932) in the same category, though the motif of a bull mating with a cow does not have any Indus correspondence.

## B. IRAN

### *Susa*

A cylinder seal from Susa was illustrated by Scheil in 1900 (*Délégation en Perse, Mémoires*, tome II, p. 129) and by Delaporte in 1920 (Delaporte, 1920, Pl. 25, no. 15). It is made of bone. Its stratigraphical details are lacking. The basic design resembles the bull-on-manger device of the Indus seals and there are also some badly copied Indus characters. The carving is generally poor. The bull may be said to be mal-proportioned and elongated. The seal obviously was not of direct Indus workmanship but the Indus influence is too prominent to be overlooked. Delaporte put this in "époque archaïque" but it is likely to belong to the Akkadian-post-Akkadian period.

S. R. Rao (1973, p. 118, p. 126, n. 13) refers to a "square Indus seal" from Susa which he says he saw in the Louvre reserve collection. The seal in question has been published by Pierre Amiet (1972, p. 207, Pl. 153, no. 1643; also p. 192) and assigned by him to the Akkadian and post-Akkadian periods. It is a circular seal (diameter .22 m and thickness .12 m) showing a well-curved bull and six Indus pictographs on the obverse, with a pierced and grooved boss (grooved by a single incision) on the back. Thus it belongs to the round variety of seals from Ur.

### *Hissar*

A cylinder seal from Hissar was published by Eric Schmidt in 1937 (Schmidt, 1937, p. 199, figure 118) and he noted that its pattern resembled the bovine impression on the Indus valley seals. Stuart Piggott (1943, p. 181) referred to it again but after that this does not seem to have figured in any discussion on the present problem. The published illustration in Schmidt, 1937 is not at all clear and one may quote his description of the seal. "Seal H116 occurred in refuse dirt of Hissar IIIB . . . The material is greyish-brown serpentine. The sealing pattern shows a tree-shaped symbol with bilobed top and dashes at either side of the trunk. A bovine with curved horn stands in front of the tree. One eye and details of the muzzle are marked. The body is sub-divided into three parts. The chest and the posterior part are almost alike and connected by a narrow band. The joints of the two legs shown are exaggerated by spine-shaped protuberances. The long tail is bent at a right angle. Below the neck and the chest is a square cross. Below the belly there are two superimposed crescents and above the back five vertical crescents" (Schmidt, 1937, p. 199). According to Piggott (1943, p. 181) the bull "might be reasonably enough considered as vaguely Harappan in origin".

### *Tepe Yahya*

From Yahya IVA (terminal date:  $2320 \pm 135$  B.C., uncalibrated) was recovered a sherd having directly above its base unmistakably Indus rectangular stamp seal with the Indus pictographs only (Lamberg-Karlovsky, 1972, p. 92, Pl. IIb). This is perhaps the most significant piece of stratified evidence suggesting the overland route between the Indus and Mesopotamia.

## C. SYRIA

### *Hama*

A fragment of a cylinder seal of "white stone" was reported from Hama by Harald Ingholt in 1940 (Ingholt, 1940, p. 62, Pl. XIX, 1). The context

is Hama H, roughly 2000–1750 B.C. The fragment shows a bull with up-turned face. The horns are short but well-curved. The eye is big and rounded, and vaguely recalls the Kulli way of rendering eyes. The two motifs below the face of the bull are said to be typical “fill” motifs “from the Akkadian to Old Babylonian times, which also occur repeatedly on Syro-Cappadocian or early Syrian cylinder seals of the 2nd millennium B.C.” (During-Caspers, 1969). Though Wheeler (1968, p. 118) includes it in his discussion on the Harappan chronology, one is not quite sure how this can be considered as an Indus-type seal.

#### D. *PERSIAN GULF*

The main difficulty in locating Indus types or motifs on the Persian gulf seals from Bahrain and Failaka is that so few of them are adequately published. It is not, however, necessary in the present context to go into the classificatory and other details of the Persian gulf seals themselves. What deserves attention is that no specific Indus seal exists among the Persian gulf finds. Bibby (1972, p. 270) has illustrated a fragment of a round seal with three Indus pictographs. This does not conform to any Persian gulf type but is “thin and flat with a little high boss”. This comes from Failaka. Its exact counterpart does not seem to figure among the published Indus specimens. The nearest approximation seems to be some tiny seals from Harappa (Vats, 1940, Pl. XCV, 370–375), which, however, are inscribed on both sides.

Only two other Persian gulf seals, both of them from Bahrain, may be said to possess some Indus influence. Both of them belong to what During-Caspers (1969) calls the type C of the Persian gulf seals. This type of seal has a prominent button boss at the back pierced in one direction and divided across the other by one or two grooves. Only one more seal but without any Indus influence belong to this type of seals in the Persian gulf area.

On none of the two seals suggesting an Indus influence is there any Indus pictograph but both of them show a short-horned bull with lowered head in one and erect in the other. The pointed, triangular treatment of the tip of the bull's tail on the seal which shows it with lowered head is another evidence in support of its probable Indus affinity. However, one should also note the other associated devices—scorpion, foot-print and in one case a bird with outstretched wings—which come within the range of Mesopotamian and Persian gulf glyptic art and suggest that the seals under consideration were manufactured decidedly outside the Indus valley, possibly in the Persian gulf area itself. This type is found in Bahrain in a somewhat earlier stratigraphical context than that of the more common (or, type D) of the Persian gulf seals. This last variety has been dated around 1900

B.C., though it has been argued (During-Caspers, 1969) that some of these seals may go back earlier. A broad Akkadian level may be ascribed to the two seals of type C showing Indus influence. Or, they may be somewhat later. It may be noted in passing that the absence of a typical Indus seal in the Persian gulf area comes as a bit of surprise considering the importance of this region as an intermediary in the Indus-Mesopotamia trade.

## II. SEALS OF WEST ASIATIC TYPES AND MOTIFS IN THE INDUS CONTEXT

### A. PROBLEM OF ROUND SEALS WITH BUTTON BOSS

There are two types of round seals from the Indus (Marshall, 1931, pp. 375-376). One is inscribed on both sides and irrelevant to the present context. The second type has a button boss at the back, which is pierced in one direction and incised across the other by one or two lines. It is this second type which deserves consideration in the present context. Out of the hundreds of seals from Mohenjodaro only 4 may indisputably be said to belong to this type. These are nos. 309, 383 and 478 in Marshall, 1931 (Pls. CX, 309; CXII, 383; CXIV, 478) and no. 500 in Mackay, 1938 (Pl. XCVI, 500). No. 309 (steatite, diameter .9 in.) shows a typical Indus bull with a few pictographs above. No. 383 is also of steatite (diameter 1.4 in.) but does not represent any bull. This seal is only two-third intact and shows the heads and necks of six animals radiating "outwards from a ring-like motif" (Marshall, 1931, p. 390). It has been supposed that "of the four unbroken heads, one is a unicorn's, another a short-horned bull's, the third an antelope's, and the fourth a tiger's. The remaining two heads were probably those of a rhinoceros and an elephant" (Marshall, 1931, p. 390). It may be added that it is very difficult to be sure of the identity of these animals. There seems to be only one pictograph on the illustrated specimen. No. 478 (steatite, diameter 1.25 inches) is also broken and the surviving fragment shows a few pictographs only. No. 500 in Mackay, 1938 (steatite, diameter 1.1 in.) shows a bull below three pictographs and there is a trough-like object below the head of the bull. Buchanan (1965, p. 305, no. 7) draws attention to a baked-clay cream-slipped amulet which shows on the obverse an urus bull (Mackay, 1938, p. 326) standing before the usual cult-object. There are also a few pictographs above the bull (Mackay, 1938, Pl. CI, 13). This seems to have been impressed by a round seal of this type. Another instance of this type of seal comes from Chanhudaro and is illustrated in Mackay, 1943, Pl. LI, 23.

On the basis of such limited occurrence of this type of seal among the Indus finds it seems logical to postulate that this constitutes an intrusive

element among the repertoire of Indus seals. Apart from these 5 definite examples from the Indus context, the number of its occurrence is 2 (or, 3) in the Persian gulf, 6 at Ur and 1 at Lagash. Of the 5 Indus examples one, no. 383, displays in its whorl-motif a decided stylistic link both with the Persian gulf and Mesopotamia. The other examples, however, do not show any such stylistic link and all of them bear Indus pictographs. Of the Persian gulf specimens, one does not have anything Indus about it but the other two bear an Indus bull along with some Mesopotamian and Persian gulf glyptic devices. Of the six Ur examples all bear Indus bull and pictographs and so does the specimen from Lagash.

On the basis of the present data one conclusion seems inescapable. These round seals with button boss at the back were not particularly at home in any of the three regions—the Indus, the Persian gulf and Mesopotamia. Considering the pictographs and devices it seems that they somehow lean more to the Indus context than to any other. They may be best explained as meant specifically for the Indus-Persian gulf-Mesopotamia trade.

#### B. *CYLINDER SEALS IN THE INDUS CONTEXT*

In Marshall, 1931 (p. 371. Pl. CXIV. 529-533) there is a reference to 5 "seals" of ivory from Mohenjodaro, all tentatively placed under the category of "cylinder seals". The purpose of these objects is not clear at all and they are quite unlike the cylinder seals of Mesopotamia and elsewhere.

Mackay in 1938 (pp. 344-345. Pls. LXXXIV. 78, LXXXIX. 376. XCIV. 488) describes and illustrates three specimens which can with more justification be called cylinder seals. No. 78 is roughly made of a soft white paste which, judging by the remains in the interstices of the carving, had possibly a glaze of pale turquoise blue. It is rather difficult to make anything out of the impression except a number of diagonal lines but Mackay (1938, p. 344) says that "at one end there is a swastika and at the other two or more pictographs which it is impossible to make out".

No. 376 is a more clear example. The material is calcite and the dimension .86 x .5 in. The impression is not particularly clear. Two scorpions, one at each end, is unmistakable. At the centre there appears to be another creature—an eight-legged one with pincers. Its identity is not certain but interestingly enough, this seems to occur on the cylinder seal from Susa mentioned earlier.

No. 488 is the best specimen of all. Its material is steatite and the dimension 1 x .59 in. There is a clear representation of two quadrupeds with short tail and horns, which Mackay (1938, p. 344) prefers to think as goats. In between them is the representation of a tree or bush and on their backs there is a bird. In front of the first animal is a vertically set mythical long-

tailed creature with something in its mouth. This resembles the creature on either side of the central human figure on the upper panel of the seal discussed by Corbman (1936). The resemblance is not exact but there is a generic similarity. It may finally be added that none of these seals from Mohenjodaro can be specifically equated to anything Mesopotamian, though the cylinder seal itself is a Mesopotamian type.

Thus, the cylinder seals which can positively be related to Indus-West Asia interrelations are the following: one from Tell Asmar, two from Ur, one from Susa, one from Hissar(?) and three from Mohenjodaro itself. Like the round seals with button boss these seals also show a mixture of elements, both West Asiatic and Indus. One may suggest that these seals also were meant specifically for some aspects of the Indus-West Asiatic trade. It may be noted that no seal of this type has been discovered in the Persian gulf area. It is unlikely that they were used in the Indus-Persian gulf-Mesopotamia trade like the round seals with button boss. They were more likely to be used in the Indus-Persia-Mesopotamia trade which passed overland. We do not think that the discoveries of this type at Susa, Tell Asmar and possibly Hissar leave much room for doubt in this case.

### C. *A PERSIAN GULF SEAL AT LOTHAL*

The seal in question (steatite of a light yellow colour with a creamy surface; the dimension: 2.25 cm long and 1.25 cm thick at the centre) is a surface find and was published by Rao in 1963 (Rao, 1963). At the back is a perforated boss covering almost the entire surface and incised by three lines between four dot-in-circles. On the face there are two gazelles or antelopes with upturned necks, flanking a scorpion-like creature. It does not bear script of any kind. This seal is identical with the type D or the most common type of the Persian gulf seals and thus indisputably of the Persian gulf origin.

### D. *SEALS WITH SUPPOSEDLY WEST ASIATIC MOTIFS IN THE INDUS CONTEXT*

The seals of this type are primarily the ones with cross, swastika and just some kind of compartmented motifs. A number of them occur in the Indus context (cf. Marshall, 1931, Pl. CXIV, 500-515, 520-528b; Mackay, 1938, Pl. LXXXIII, 1, 17, 36, 37, Pl. LXXXVI, 172, Pl. XCIV, 383, Pl. XCVIII, 619, 624, Pl. CII, 11; Vats, 1940, Pl. XCV, 389-392, 396-400; Rao, 1963, Pl. X, a, b). First, the cross-motif is too widespread a motif to serve as an evidence of any specific contact. The compartmented square motif also is too much of a general motif to be of any specific cultural value. The swastika motif, according to Rao, is more common in Mesopotamia than in the Indus. The fallacy of this assumption has already been pointed out by

During-Caspers (1969). She has rightly pointed out that Rao's references to the occurrence of this motif at sites like Tell Brak, Ur, Alisar, Sialk etc. do not mean anything simply because of their differing cultural contexts. She refers to Amiet's study of the origin of this motif (Amiet, 1961), which suggests for it an Iranian, rather than a Mesopotamian origin. But even this is largely a mere academic exercise because swastika also is too general a motif to be pinned down to a specific origin. Rao (1963, p. 98) also refers to a lozenge-shaped seal from Harappa (Vats, 1940, Pl. XCI, 255) with an eagle with outstretched wings on one side and a sort of compartmented cross with a square at the centre on the other. He could also have referred to another amulet from Mohenjodaro (Mackay, 1938, Pl. CII, 15 a and b) which has an eagle on one side and the impression of a rectangular seal complete with pictographs and bull on the other. Rao's Tell Brak (for the Tell Brak specimen, Mallowan, 1917, p. 171, Pl. XXXII, 5) and Susa (for the Susa specimen, *Délégation en Perse, Mémoires*, tome 12, 1911, pp. 138-139) analogies for this eagle do not mean anything simply because the shape of the Harappan seal—the lozenge shape—is very distinctive and for any comparison it is this shape which should first be taken into consideration, not the outstretched wings of its eagle or the turning of the eagle's head to the left. The nearest analogy for this type of seal comes from Hissar IIB (Schmidt, 1937, figure 118, H 2697), though the Hissar specimen does not carry any eagle.

On the basis of this kind of seal-impression from Lothal and Harappa published by Rao (1963) During-Caspers (1969) has argued that the seals bearing this kind of impression were used in the Indus foreign trade. It could well be so but archaeologically it should not be proper to suggest any specific contact on the basis of such designs because they are not distinctive enough to be of any specific cultural value.

#### E. SEALS WITH WEST ASIATIC MOTIFS IN THE INDUS CONTEXT

As far as the Indus seals are concerned one can easily isolate at least three motifs which are likely to have had their origin in a West Asiatic context. A number of Mohenjodaro seals (Mackay, 1938, Pl. LXXXIV, 75, 76; Pl. LXXXV, 122; Pl. XCV, 451) show a man struggling between two animals, presumably tigers. The stylistic treatment of the human figure and the animals is not the same in all cases but the motif is clear enough. As Mackay (1938, p. 337) puts it: "There can be no doubt that the scene on these four seals shows Sumerian or Elamite influence, but to bring it into agreement with Indian fauna tigers have been substituted for lions. The nude figure itself is not unlike certain figures of Gilgamesh. . .". On another seal (Marshall, 1931, Pl. CXI, 357) a man with horns, tail and hooves

is seen struggling with a horned tiger-like animal beside a tree. This type of human figure occurs alone on seal no. 356 (Marshall, 1931, Pl. CXI). It has been pointed out that this figure resembles "Enkidu, the companion of Gilgamesh, whose head, shoulders and arms were human, but with the addition of a pair of bison's horn" (Marshall, 1931, p. 389).

A good illustration of the whorl-motif is seal no. 383 in Marshall, 1931 (Pl. CXI) but there are several other partial and complete examples (Mackay, 1938, Pl. LXXXIII, 24, Pl. XCVIII, 641, Pl. XCVI, 494; Marshall, 1931 Pl. CXII, 382, 386). This motif occurs both in Mesopotamia and the Persian gulf (an example from the Persian gulf in Bibby, 1972, p. 373). There is, however, no point in emphasizing the composite animals and human figures on the Indus seals because composite animals and human figures are parts of a widespread mythology and need not suggest any specific inspiration. Attention should be drawn to a rectangular seal, no. 479 in Mackay, 1938, Pl. XCV. This shows two lying antelopes arranged one above the other but with faces in the opposite directions. The material of the seal—"a fine white marble-like stone"—and the design so impressed Mackay that he (1938, p. 332) considered the seal a direct import from Elam. The possibility is by no means remote; all that one can positively say is that the antelopes arranged in this fashion may be seen on certain seals from Susa (Delaporte, 1920, Pl. 22).

It may be mentioned at this place that according to During-Caspers (1969) the representation of water-buffalo on some Akkadian seals may be due to the Indus influence. The Indus influence may also have something to do with the representation of a small squatting monkey with short tail, which is frequently depicted on the Persian gulf seals (During-Caspers, 1969).

#### F. CYLINDER SEALS IN NON-INDUS INDIAN CONTEXTS

There are only two seals which belong to this category. One is of unknown provenance and now in the Nagpur museum. The other one is from Maski in south Deccan.

The one in the Nagpur museum was published in 1914 by M. A. Suboor (1914). The seal was placed among the ornaments in the Industrial Section of the museum till Suboor realized its significance. It is set in a gold handle and it looks plausible that somebody was using it as a pendant in a gold chain. L. W. King of the British Museum to whom an impression of the seal was sent for observations gave the following report: "The scene engraved on the seal represents a goddess standing with hands raised in adoration before the weather-god Adad or his West Semitic equivalent Amurru. In the field are his emblem, the lightning fork, the disc and crescent. The



small figures are probably divine attendants. The inscription gives the owner's name and reads "Libur-beli, servant of ( . . . . )." The end of the second line is apparently rubbed or worn and has not come out in the impression; it probably stated that Libur-beli was "the servant of the god Amurru or Adad". The meaning of the Babylonian name Libur-beli is "May my lord be strong". The seal dates from about 2000 B.C., the period of the First Dynasty of Babylon" (Suboor, 1914, p. 462).

The seal whose find-spot is unknown cannot be taken as evidence of Indus-West Asia interrelations. The way it is set in a gold-handle clearly suggests that it was used as an ornament, and thus it could have come from anywhere, not necessarily any place in India.

The context of the second "seal" is clear. It comes from Maski in south Deccan. It should, however, be emphasized that it is a surface-find. It is made of terracotta and shows a man driving an elephant. The design is not particularly well-done; the human figure is a bit schematised. It is also shown wearing a "radiate" headdress. The elephant is rendered with a sloping back; the impression is that it is shown rising from a lying posture. The composition, on the whole, is unmistakably Indian and so is the groove at the bottom. There need not be any doubt about that. The "radiate" headdress in the context of south Deccan does not by any means connote anything West Asian. It is worth noting that Richard Burnett of the British Museum, who commented on it, could not relate it to anything West Asiatic. His comment is very much vague: "Of the material from Mesopotamia, it most resembles that from Jemdet Nasr . . . it is, of course, not Mesopotamian, but hails from somewhere else, under Mesopotamian influence, perhaps provincial Elamite" (Thapar, 1957, p. 24, n. 2).

F. R. Allchin (personal discussion) suggests—and the present author agrees with him—that this was just a terracotta roller to impress designs on the shoulder of the early historic pottery. To suggest that it derives from the West Asiatic cylinder seals and then to speculate on the Mesopotamian relations is pointless.

### CONCLUSIONS

The issue which must finally be faced is: what these data amount to historically? To recapitulate the basic evidence, there are only three indisputably Indus seals from Mesopotamia, two from Kish and one from Lagash. The precise stratigraphic context is uncertain but whatever evidence there is suggests a date earlier than the 18th century B.C. i.e., earlier than the First Dynasty of Babylon. One of them could be Sargonic. The Lagash specimen which possesses only the Indus script is supposed to belong to the Larsa period. There is no point in referring to the Indus seal supposedly from

Unima because it was acquired from a dealer. The two seals with concentric square designs, one each from Tell Asmar and Tepe Gawra, do not tell much because they are not distinctive enough to be considered positive evidence but it may be noted that their chronological range is Sargonic. Apart from these there are two types of seals which suggest contact with the Indus—the round one with a perforated and grooved button boss and the cylinder. There are six examples of the first type from Ur—Gadd nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 15 and 16 (Gadd nos. 17 and 18 are left out because there is no specific information about their provenance). Of these nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 are without any stratified context; no. 15 may be Sargonic while no. 16, as far as the evidence goes, may belong to the post-Akkadian-Third Dynasty date range. Another seal of this type is supposed to come from Lagash and the one in the Cook collection is also supposed to come from somewhere in Mesopotamia. Of the cylinder seals in question two (Gadd nos. 6 and 7) are from Ur and another from Tell Asmar. Of these three specimens it may be said that there is nothing much specifically Harappan in Gadd no. 7, though the evidence of the other two is clear enough. Gadd no. 6 is possibly from a Larsa context. Gadd no. 7 may belong to the Sargonic period and a similar context is clear for the seal from Tell Asmar. The seal discussed by Corbman (1936) belongs to this type, though its provenance is unknown.

From Bahrain there are only two round seals with button boss, which show Indus influence but no pictograph. Their date should not be later than 1900 B.C. The same may be said about the fragment of a round seal with only Indus pictographs, which does not conform to any known type, from Failaka. The context of the Susa cylinder is not clear but it fits into the category of similar specimens from Ur and Tell Asmar as do the round button-bossed seals from Susa and the Persian gulf into the similar type from Ur and Lagash. There is just a possibility that the cylinder seal showing a bull from Hissar IIIB may belong to the category of the Ur, Susa and Tell Asmar cylinder seals. No cylinder seal of this type is known from the Persian gulf. The seal impression from Tepe Yahya is directly Indus. The evidence from Hama in Syria may be discounted and so can be the elusive evidence of the occurrence of swastika and other designs both in the Indus and elsewhere. The round button-bossed type from Ur and the Persian gulf (also Lagash and Susa) and the cylinder seal type from Ur, Tell Asmar, Susa, and Hissar (?) can both be matched among the Indus finds. The evidence of the Persian gulf seal at Lothal is also clear enough. Equally clear is the evidence furnished by the occurrence of such motifs as Gilgamesh between two tigers, Enkidu struggling with a beast, the whorl-device and the antelope design on the Indus seals, water-buffalo on some Mesopotamian seals and squatting monkey on some Persian gulf seals.

It has been argued in the present paper that the round button-bossed variety was intended specifically for the Indus-Persian gulf-Mesopotamia trade and may be taken as evidence of maritime contact. The cylinder seal type in question reflects on the other hand an overland trade from the Indus to Mesopotamia through Persia. The absence of this type of seal in the Persian gulf and its occurrence at Tell Asmar and Susa along with the find of a sherd with Indus script at Tepe Yahya may be said to point strongly to this. This particular category of seals need not be taken as an evidence of maritime contact through the Persian gulf.

It is more or less clear that the chronological evidence offered by these seals broadly falls between the Sargonic and the Larsa periods of the Mesopotamian sequence, i.e., roughly between 2300 and 1900 B.C. As far as the seals are concerned there is no evidence to suggest any Indus-West Asia relation in the pre-Sargonic period just as there is no evidence to take it down to a post-Larsa period. There is no point in referring to Gadd no. 12 which is "very doubtfully Kassite" because that is a typical Persian gulf seal unrelated to the Indus.

The seals, however, tell tantalisingly little about the general nature of the Indus-Mesopotamian interrelations. There was some kind of direct contact as the typical Indus seals from Kish and the rectangular seal with the Indus script from Lagash suggest. But quite obviously, the role of the intermediaries—the Persian gulf on the one hand and the landmass of Persia on the other—was very significant. There were two seal-types which were not specific to any of these two regions but were made in response to this trade, both maritime and overland, through these intermediaries. Added to these are the Persian gulf seal from Lothal, the round seal with Indus script from Failaka and the primarily Mesopotamian motifs like Gilgamesh and the whorl-device which occasionally occur on both the Persian Gulf and the Indus seals.

Behind the still mute archaeological testimony of these seals lies obviously an exciting world of trade. The present paper has only tried to demonstrate what precisely is this testimony and the extent to which this can be utilized for any historical reconstruction.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Dr. F. R. Allchin of Churchill College, Cambridge, gave encouragement to write the paper and commented on its first draft. Mr. J. R. Knox of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, helped me check a reference. Dr. P. R. S. Moorey of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, showed me the seal from Umma. My grateful acknowledgement is due to all of them.

∴

## REFERENCES

1. ALLCHIN, F. R. 1974. *Personal Discussion*.
2. AMET, P. 1961. *La Glyptique Mesopotamienne Archaïque*. Paris.
3. — 1972. *Glyptique Susienne*, 2 volumes. Paris.
4. BIBBY, G. 1972. *Looking for Dilmun*. Hammondsworth.
5. BISSING, VON. 1927. Ein vor etwa 15 jahren erworbenes "Harappa-siegel", *Archiv fur Orientalforschung*, 4, pp. 21-22.
6. BUCHANAN, B. 1954. The date of the so-called Second Dynasty graves of the Royal Cemetery at Ur. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 74, pp. 147-153.
7. — 1965. A dated "Persian Gulf" seal and its implications. *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger*, pp. 204-209. Chicago.
8. COOMARASWAMY, A. 1929. A very ancient Indian seal. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, 27, pp. 28-29.
9. CORBIAT, SIMONE. 1936. An Indo-Sumerian cylinder. *Iraq*, 3, pp. 100-103.
10. DE CLERCQ. 1888. *Collection De Clercq. Catalogue Methodique et Raisonne Antiquites Assyriennes*, tome premiere, Paris.
11. DELAPORTE, L. 1920. *Catalogue des Cylindres Orientaux*, tome I. Paris.
12. *Delegation en Perse, Memoires*, 1900 and 1911, tomes II and XII. Paris.
13. DURING-CASPERS, E. C. L. 1969. *Archaeological Evidence for Maritime Trade in the Persian Gulf in the Third Millennium B.C.* Ph.D. dissertation. Univ. of London.
14. FRANKFORT, H. 1933. *Tell Asmar, Khafaje and Khorsabad*. Chicago.
15. — 1934. The Indus Civilization and the Near East. *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology for the Year 1932*. Leiden. pp. 1-12.
16. — 1939. *Cylinder Seals*. London.
17. — 1955. *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region*. Chicago.
18. GADD, C. J. 1932. Seals of ancient Indian style found at Ur. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 18, pp. 191-210.
19. GENOUILLAG, H. DE. 1930. Rapport sur les travaux de la mission de Telloh. *Revue d'Assyriologie*, 27.
20. — 1936. *Fouilles de Telloh*, vol. II. Paris.
21. HALLO, W. W. AND BUCHANAN, B. 1965. A "Persian Gulf" seal on an old Babylonian agreement. *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger*. Chicago. pp. 199-203.
22. INGHOIT, H. 1940. *Rapport Preliminaire sur Sept Campagnes de Fouilles a Hama en Syrie*. Copenhagen.
23. LAMBERG-KARLOVSKY, C. C. 1972. Tepe Yahya 1971. *Iran*, 10, pp. 89-99.

24. LANGDON, S. 1924. *Excavations at Kish*, vol. I. Paris.
25. ——— 1931. A new factor in the problem of Sumerian origins. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, pp. 593-596.
26. ——— 1932. Another Indus valley seal. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, pp. 47-48.
27. LEGRAIN, L. 1951. *Ur Excavations*, vol. X (*Seal Cylinders*). London.
28. MACKAY, F. J. 1925. Sumerian Connections with ancient India. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, pp. 697-701.
29. ——— 1938. *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*. Delhi.
30. ——— 1943. *Chanhudaro Excavations*. New Haven.
31. MALLOWAN, M. E. L. 1947. Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar. *Iraq*, 9.
32. MARSHALL, J. 1931. *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*. London.
33. PIGGOTT, S. 1943. Dating the Hissar sequence— the Indian evidence. *Antiquity*, 17, pp. 169-182.
34. ——— 1944. A cylinder-seal from south India. *Antiquity*, 18, pp. 98-99.
35. POSTGATE, J. N. 1974. *Personal Discussion*.
36. RAO, S. R. 1963. A "Persian Gulf" seal from Lothal. *Antiquity*, 37, pp. 96-99.
37. ——— 1973. *Lothal and the Indus Civilization*. Bombay.
38. SARZEC, ERNEST DE AND HEUZEY, LEON. 1884-1912. *Decouvertes en Chaldee*, Vol. I. Paris.
39. SCHEIL, V. 1925. Un nouveau sceau Hindou pseudo-Sumerien. *Revue d'Assyriologie*, 22, pp. 55-56.
40. SCHMIDT, E. F. 1937. *Excavations at Tepe Hissar*. Philadelphia.
41. SPEISER, E. A. 1935. *Excavations at Tepe Gawra*, vol. I. Philadelphia.
42. SUBOOR, M. A. 1914. A note on a Babylonian seal in the Central Museum. Nagpur. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, pp. 461-463.
43. THAPAR, B. K. 1957. Maski 1954. *Ancient India*, 13.
44. THUREAU-DANGIN, F. 1925. Sceaux de Tello et sceaux de Harappa. *Revue d'Assyriologie*, 22, pp. 99-101.
45. VATS, M. S. 1944. *Excavations at Harappa*. Delhi.
46. WATELIN, L. CH. 1934. *Excavations at Kish*, vol. IV. Paris.
47. WOOLLEY, C. L. 1928. Excavations at Ur, 1926-1927. *Antiquaries Journal*, 8, pp. 1-29.
48. ——— 1931. Excavations at Ur, 1930-1931. *Antiquaries Journal*, 11, pp. 343-381.
49. ——— 1932. Excavations at Ur, 1931-1932. *Antiquaries Journal*, 12, pp. 355-392.
50. ——— 1934. *Ur Excavations*, vol. II (*The Royal Cemetery*). London.
51. WHEELER, R. E. M. 1968. *The Indus Civilization*. Cambridge.

## POST-SCRIPT

Two new pieces of data which have been published after the finalisation of the present paper will be discussed in this post-script.

(1) A cylinder seal from the Harappan context of Kalibangan has been reported by B. B. Lal in his paper "some aspects of the archaeological evidence relating to the Indus script" in *Puratattva, Bulletin of the Indian Archaeological Society*, no. 7 (1974), pp. 20-24 (p. 23, plate VB). This relates to the section IIB of the main body of the paper. The exact context, material and measurement of the seal are not mentioned in the brief publication. The composition of the depicted scene has two distinct sections. First, to the right on the impression, there is a composite figure, half human and half animal, with an elaborate, flowing headdress. The human part of the body is schematised with spiky hands and a sort of beaked face. The animal section is striped and possesses distinct claws and an inwardly curved pointed tail. There is a spiky plant in the background in the extreme right and in its front there is a plant with a rounded trunk and branches. Above this plant in front there is an Indus script sign represented by three vertical strokes. The second unit of the composition lies to the left and shows a female between two males each of whom holds her hand with one hand and has the other one upraised in a sort of striking posture. The upraised hand of the male on the right seems to hold a small spear-shaped weapon. Immediately above the head of the female there seems to be an arch formed by two objects which have been placed cross-wise and which look like two sword-shaped weapons. Two points deserve notice in this connection. Its parallel is hard to match among the west Asiatic cylinder seals, though a generally spiky treatment of the animal and plant bodies seems to be common among the Susa seals (Amiet 1972, Plates 170-175). But on the whole the scene depicted seems to be convincingly Indus; the treatment of the human figures on the left is Indus beyond doubt. Secondly, we believe that it is a cult scene depicting a human sacrifice. The composite form of half man and half animal seems to be a deity to which the female on the left is being sacrificed. In the entire range of the Indus material there is only one other scene which has been interpreted as representing a female sacrifice (Marshall 1931, p. 51; Vats 1940, plate XCIII, no. 304), and it may be added that the scene here is far more explicit. Why a cylinder seal, a west Asiatic type, was chosen to depict a typically Indus composition representing a female sacrifice to a deity with composite form is not known, but there is little doubt that this particular specimen is one of the most interesting seals of the Indus civilization. Lal (*ibid*) has published another seal—a typically Indus square steatite seal—which represents more or less the same composite figure of a deity.

(2) The second piece of data has been published by Maurizio Tosi in his paper "Bampur: a problem of isolation" in *East and West*, 24 (1974), pp. 29-50, figure 20, and relates to our section IIE. It is a bronze stamp seal with probable bird's head whorl from Damin, and is important for showing the general distribution of the whorl motif.

*Note* : I wish to thank the editor of the present volume for making the insertion of this post-script possible and Mr B. M. Pandey of the Archaeological Survey of India who sent me the relevant issue of the *Puratattva* by air-mail.

*N.B.* Two recent discoveries deserve a mention, however brief. (1) A typical steatite Indus seal was found (1975) in very salty debris of a Kassite house (c. 14th century B.C.) at Nippur (information from Dr M. Gibson of the Oriental Institute, Chicago). I believe that this was possibly a redeposited object from an earlier period and that this need not be taken as a piece of Indus dating evidence in the present stage of knowledge. (2) In Tepe Yahya IVA an Indus-like seal impression on a terracotta cake-like object was found in 1975 (information from Professor Lamberg-Karlovsky of the Peabody Museum, Harvard). One cannot be more sure than this on the basis of the photograph which I saw.

# Harappan Art and Life: Sketch of A Social Analysis

AMITA RAY

## I

INTENSIVE archaeological exploration and excavation in the Indus basin, Baluchistan, the Kutch Peninsula, coastal Gujarat, the Ghaggar valley of Rajasthan and the Indo-Gangetic Divide have brought to our knowledge a rich wealth of objects of art produced in the earliest urban settlements in India, mainly in the twin cities of Harappa on the river Ravi and Mohenjodaro on the Indus, which were by far the largest and the most advanced, prosperous and sophisticated ones. Lying 350 miles apart from each other, the planning of the two cities, their houses, streets, drainage system, artefacts etc. are nevertheless so similar, as to suggest that the two cities were but twin capitals of one single State and Government, and were articulations of the same socio-economic complex. Harappa being the larger complex than Mohenjodaro, one may, for convenience sake, designate the cultural complex of the two cities as Harappan; this is not likely to do any violence to scientific accuracy with regard to the theme of this study.

Stratifications laid bare by the excavators' spade show very clearly that the two cities must have been in existence for about a millenium, but it seems strange that neither in their planning nor in building techniques nor in their arts and crafts do they show any change or process of evolution; this is a phenomenon which one finds difficult to explain. Be that as it may, recent studies and research have more or less clearly established that both the cities were raised, lived in and sustained by an affluent and well-organized trading and commercial community, whose primary source of accumulation of wealth was an international trade that paid. The layout of the two cities, their buildings and artefacts also indicate in all probability that the social structure of both was hierarchical and consisted of more than one ethnic stock, that the power of the State and Government was controlled by the



King and the Priest or by the King-Priest or Priest-King, and that 'lowly abodes of artisans and shop-keepers and the larger mansions of prosperous bourgeois as in Crete'<sup>1</sup>, were both allowed to exist within the city ramparts, and not unoften, side by side.

But if certain forms and types of art objects which have been uncarthed, are any guide to the social class or classes of their makers and users, it would appear that the two cities were not inhabited by traders, businessmen, shop-keepers and artisans alone. Both Harappa and Mohenjodaro have yielded a fairly large number of terracotta female figurines roughly finished at the back (figure 1). Formally and typically they have a common denominator with the as yet historically unconnected Maurya-Sunga-Kusan terracotta female figurines which were presumably used as fertility symbols in connection with agricultural rites, a practice which is still common in the Indian villages among many tribal and folk-agricultural communities. A type of male figures wearing horns of goat or bull and long hair gathered up in curious loops, also seems to indicate that such figures were associated with certain indigenous cults of folk or tribal origin. The large number of small clay figures of animals thrown up by the excavations (figures 2, 3), are also further indications of a rural folk-practice of votive offerings of clay-animal figures at agricultural rituals, a practice which is still popular in the Indian villages, especially with the womenfolk. It is therefore a likely postulate that the urban culture complex of these two cities accommodated within itself certain elements of tribal and folk culture of indigenous origin; indeed, it is not altogether unlikely that the population of these two cities consisted of a fair segment of primary agriculturists as well, at any rate of those with whom some sort of agriculture was the primary source of wealth and whose vision and imagination were conditioned and sustained by agricultural life and its symbols.

But it is doubtful if this segment of culture could make any appreciable impact on the total culture complex of the Harappan people. 'This culture complex seems to have been sustained by a flourishing foreign trade and commerce, which presupposes the introduction and maintenance of a new technology that was unknown hitherto to the indigenous peasant communities.

Be that as it may, this paper purports to classify and analyse the forms and styles of the various objects of art and craft of the Harappan culture complex, 'within the culture itself, and not outside it'<sup>2</sup>, with a view to finding out their social origin and function. This is likely to help our understanding

<sup>1</sup> V. G. Childe, *New Light on the Most Ancient East* (London, 1935), pp. 207-08.

<sup>2</sup> A. Ghose, "The Indus Civilization: its origins, authors, extent and chronology", in *Indian Prehistory* (1964), Poona (1965), p. 116, ed. Misra and Matc.

of the socio-economic and intellectual factors and forces which may have been responsible for the creation of the arts and crafts of these two cities.

## II

The most useful and functionally the most potent craft-product must have been the diverse kiln-burnt terracotta potteries of this culture complex. Their shapes and forms and sizes are as varied as the uses they must have been put to for various ritualistic and domestic purposes which ranged from being used as burial urns to sievers and strainers and a vessel to store grain, wine and water and also for purposes of cooking food. Indeed, there is hardly any day-to-day human purpose that could not be served by one or other of the various forms of the Harappan pottery. Generally speaking, the pottery, whatever its shape and form, was given a red-ochre slip and polished to a lacquer-like finish, though examples of still more sophisticated polychrome, pottery of red, green and buff slip are not too infrequent. One cannot therefore resist the impression that the technology of pottery in Harappan culture was a very advanced one, and the variety of shape, form, quality and degree of sophistication was such as to meet the needs and requirements of all the classes of the hierarchically graded urban society of both the cities.

Interesting and significant as the potteries are, still more interesting and significant are the varied decorative patterns, designs and paintings which were evidently meant to break the monotony of the outer surfaces. These consist thematically of geometrical and vegetal forms and shapes, in the main, sometimes of animal forms too; but even when the treatment is naturalistic in the case of vegetal and animal forms, it is relatively 'abstract', the forms being denuded of the sap of life. The forms, patterns and designs are generally repetitive, the geometric ones, even conventional; but this very repetitiveness and conventionality perhaps indicate that Harappan life and culture for about a millenium or more, were themselves devoted to this repetitiveness and conventionality.

A closer analysis of the patterns, designs and paintings seem to reveal two more or less clearly defined ethnic strains in this culture complex. One set of patterns, designs and paintings frankly derive their inspiration directly from the myths, symbols and fantastically rich imageries of the contemporary Indo-Sumerian tradition. These are easily identifiable, and attention has already been drawn to this fact. There are other objects of art and craft too, which, though not directly derived from the same tradition, can nevertheless be explained in terms of this tradition, which seems to indicate that there existed in the Harappan culture complex an Indo-Sumerian ethnic strain.

But there is another set of designs, patterns and paintings which seem to form a class by themselves. Since these have not yet received the attention they deserve, a relatively more detailed reference to them is perhaps called for. As in the other set, in this one too, the patterns etc. are all drawn in black pigments before firing so that the pigments become integrated with the texture of the pottery material. The designs consist of intersecting circles, comb-pattern of varied forms, chess-board patterns in squares and single, double and even triple triangles, arranged alternately with foliage, vegetal and animal forms (figures 4, 5). This kind of combination of geometrical and natural forms is something which one does not usually come across in the art of contemporary Sumer or any other region in West Asia.<sup>3</sup> One may imagine that a composition of this nature could be an indigenous contribution, especially in view of the fact that very much later, in early Indian narrative art one finds it as a common feature. Besides, in the presentation of animal figures in these compositions, despite abstraction in treatment, one can easily notice a conscious attempt towards imparting rhythm and maintaining proportions which are inherent in the structures of the objects themselves. In some cases there is evidence of even imparting a feeling of animation, as for instance, in the presentation of the hind portion of a dog on a chalcolithic sherd from Nevasa and of the front portion of an antelope and another complete stag on the sherds from Lothal (figures 6, 7). The treatment in both instances is generalized; even so, it is clear that a conscious and successful attempt has been made to present them as naturalistically as possible within the vision and technique of a flat and generalised treatment. Moreover, there are certain compositions where one also notices an attempt at a narrative. A fine example of such an attempt comes from Lothal, where on a sherd is the presentation of a jackal looking upwards from the ground towards a crow perched on the branch of a tree (figure 8). One hardly doubts that here hangs, what one may call, a fable. Aesthetically speaking, the emphasis is certainly on the linear and plastic movement, but an attempt towards imparting some volume as well cannot be missed, nor should one miss the feeling for life which characterises the scene.

What has just been said indicates that in the Harappan culture complex there was a considerable indigenous element which made its impact felt. Naturalistic rendering of objects with an infusion of feeling for life is one of the major traits of Indian art of the historical period. So is the narrative character. It is curious that these traits should already have made their appearance on the potteries of proto-historic Harappan culture.

<sup>3</sup> A very rare Harappan motif depicts a trefoil-like design, a parallel of which can be noticed on an Elamite seal. See I. Gajjar, *Ancient Indian Art and West* (Bombay 1971), p. 21, f.n. 21, fig. 61.

## III

Harappa and Mohenjodaro have yielded a deluge of small steatite seals impressed with some kind of pictographic writing, as yet undeciphered, and representations of various types and forms of theriomorphic, therio-anthropomorphic and anthropomorphic figures like those of the unicorn, rhinoceros, humped bull, buffalo, elephant, pig, dog, sheep etc. Certain seals portray human figures with or without horns, snake-deities, semi-human and semi-bovine creatures, trees surrounded with railings, combinations of animals in the form of what looks like a *svastika*, etc. Though present on seals it is, however, rather curious that these symbols should be absent on the pottery of the Harappan complex. On the pottery from contemporary West Asia, however, a few of these symbols do find place, but never integrally in combination with the decorative patterns and designs.

One cannot be too sure about the social function or purpose of these seals. But it is not unlikely that they served as magical amulets or as sealings of particular religious sects or cults or of economic groups. A deciphering of the writings alone may perhaps provide an answer. The impressions on the seals seem to have been made by the employment of the intaglio process which enables almost a photographic copy of the negative relief.

An important group of these seals is one which represents animals "comparable to the best traditions of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia", distinctively different from "those of the brute force in the animals as treated in Mediterranean art".<sup>4</sup> A closer analysis shows that the animals are presented in clear and precise outline and in powerful and vigorously modelled contours with adequate finish. The structure of the bones and muscles too is indicative of a live animal. But the treatment is not naturalistic in the sense that the live body does not seem to swell from within and press against the surface; plasticity is rigidly controlled by a sense of localization of energy, thus rendering parts of the body imprisoned within the limits of the body (figure 9). In other words, the treatment is stylized and conventional, a kind of treatment which must have gone through a long process of evolution before it could become a fixed convention. That Harappa and Mohenjodaro have nothing to show in this process of evolution, would indicate that the convention must have been fixed elsewhere. Parallels available elsewhere show that the fixation had already taken place in West Asia. This should be clearer from the analysis which follows, of the representation of one of the animals, namely, the bull which makes its appearance on a very large number of seals.

<sup>4</sup> Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture* (Calcutta, 1933), p. 5.

It is easy to see that in any presentation of the animal, while the head and body are shown in profile, the horns, the eyes and the hoofs are all shown frontally. Evidently the artist does not attempt portraiture of any particular bull; what he does is giving a universal definition of the bull in visual terms. The animal itself, the objects in front of it which are, more or less, the same or similar in all representations of the animal, and the pictographic writing above, all together constitute a design, set in a formula. The humped, so-called *brahmani* bull is perhaps the best example of this type (figure 10). But it is a repetitive type and somewhat monotonous in its repetition, which is one more evidence of a set convention.

There is however, a smaller group of animal forms which can, more or less, definitely be attributed to West Asian origin or inspiration. Quite a few of them depict a semi-human, semi-bovine figure fighting with a tiger. The well-known story of Gilgamesh in which a bull-man plays an important role, may have been an archetype for such a figuration. The conception reaches further development as a decorative device on a seal recovered from Mohenjodaro, where a hero is shown, singly strangling two tigers, one with each hand (figure 11). A similar bull-man appears on a Sargonid seal. A most common Harappan motif is that of a human-headed bull or ram (figure 12) which seems to have been an echo of the Sumerian form which one sees on cylinders of the Third Early Dynasty period.<sup>5</sup> There is a seal from Mohenjodaro which depicts a horned man; this type of horned figure too, seems to have been inspired by similar figures from Sumer. A most interesting seal indicating such Sumerian contacts, represents a figure dancing in front of a unicorn.<sup>6</sup> The ruins of the Harappan culture complex have, indeed, yielded a fairly good number of seals which depict permutations, combinations and adaptations of West Asian motifs, which seem to indicate a line of communication between India and West Asia, which, in its turn, presupposes a close trade and commercial contact. This is what led Wheeler to say that "the idea of civilization came to the Indus from the Euphrates and the Tigris".<sup>7</sup>

## IV

Reference has been made at the beginning of this essay to the Harappan terracotta figurines significant of fertility and to terracotta animal figures used presumably for purpose of votive offerings. No further comment on them is therefore necessary for the purpose of this essay, except that similar

<sup>5</sup> H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London, 1939), p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> E. Mackay, *Further excavations at Mohenjodaro* (Delhi, 1938), p. 316, Pl. LXXXVIII.

<sup>7</sup> M. Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization* (London, 1968), p. 101.



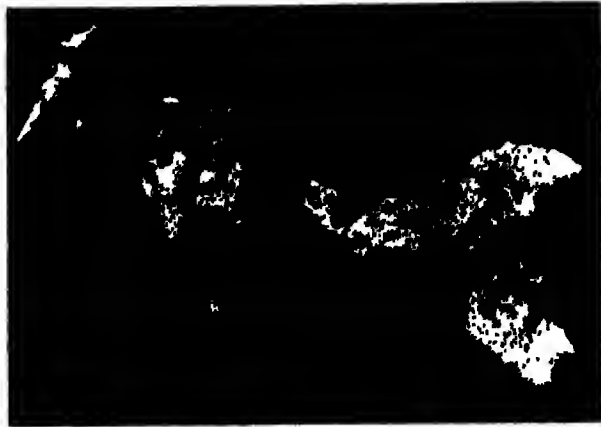
Bronze dancing girl from Mohenjodaro

PLATE II



No. 2

Teracotta Bull. Lothal



No. 3

Horse (2). Lothal



No. 8

Sheep-headed man. Harappa



No. 5

Dog painted on a sherd. Nevasa



No. 4



No. 6

Sherd from Harappa: traditional checker board motif along with human and animal figures. Depiction of such human figure on Indus Valley pottery is rather scarce

Painted pottery of Harappan period. Lothal



No. 7

Painted pot sherd. Lothal





Dancing male from Harappa

female figurines and animal figures having a vague affinity, are also known from West Asian and Mediterranean regions.

When one comes to sculpture proper, Harappan culture, strangely enough, has very little to offer. All that has come down to us, consists of a couple of small, bearded male busts from Mohenjodaro carved out of whitish limestone, a small male torso of reddish stone from Mohenjodaro, a small metal (bronze) figure of a dancing girl, also from Mohenjodaro, and the trunk of a small male dancing figure carved out of a greyish limestone from Harappa. It is somewhat significant that all the objects are very small in size, and except those of the Mohenjodaro dancing girl and the red stone male torso, made of poor material. Formally and conceptually too, they do not reveal any great imagination or technical skill, which in the context of a highly developed and sophisticated urban culture and civilization, cannot but cause surprise. One cannot help feeling that here was a sophisticated urban society sustained by a high level material culture but conventional in its behaviour pattern, ideas and imagination, the conventions having been evolved and fixed elsewhere. The dominant communities of this society, the ruling groups, traders and businessmen, seem to have been fed by forms, fashions and conventions borrowed from abroad, a hypothesis which finds support from the art of the seals, the larger bulk of the potteries and their decorations and from the few sculptures just referred to. Indeed, the meagre evidence of freshness and of creative vitality that one comes across is in those objects of art that seem to have originated from the folk levels of this society: a few decorative designs and paintings on the potteries, the terracotta animal figures and female figurines and the cast-metal dancing girl and the red stone male torso, for instance, from Mohenjodaro.

But be that as it may, the bearded male busts from Mohenjodaro (figures 13, 14) seem to be formally and historically important. Wearing a cloak with trefoil design and a somewhat contemplative look, frankly conventional in form and appearance, these figures have often been identified as *Shamans* or priests. The trefoil design is frankly of Sumerian origin and inspiration and so are the doing of the hair, the beard and the shaven upper lip. The Sumers used to worship such figures; whether at Mohenjodaro these figures continued to enjoy a religious significance or not, is difficult to say.

The small male dancing figure from Harappa (figure 15) is certainly a better product of art, being aesthetically more satisfying. But its aesthetic vision and treatment do not seem to have any continuity in and relation with the Indian plastic tradition of the historical period. The line of the swing of movement lacks the flowing rhythm of the later Indian norm; the volume of the contours too lacks the subtle and sensitive transition of the planes

which is characteristic of the Indian historical tradition. Here in this instance the masses are treated in a compact and somewhat frozen manner and in portioned surfaces, as for instance, in the regions of the chest and the abdomen. Indeed, the vision and treatment of this figure is such that one finds it difficult to affiliate it to or connect it with anything that we know of in the most ancient art of West Asia. Its vision of form and its treatment are rather East Mediterranean—late Egyptian or archaic Greek. Yet, one must not forget that technically it has more primitive features; its head and arms are worked out separately and fixed with the torso with the help of square notches. Besides, the fact remains that it was found at a stratified level which is earlier than that of late Egypt or archaic Greece. This Harappa figure remains an enigma to any student of the history of art of the ancient world.

One feels much more sure, however, with the red stone male torso (figure 16) and the cast-metal dancing girl from Mohenjodaro (figure 17). As one looks at them one perceives at once that they have a strong Indian feeling which originates not only from their outer content but also from the form which interprets the content. A subtle naturalism and soft and sensitive response to life characterise both the figures. The stance, pose and attitude, the flexible, resilient, and graceful, dynamic and yet generalized treatment, more of the dancing girl than of the male torso, are qualities which characterise Indian art of the historical period. On all counts the Mohenjodaro dancing girl could easily belong to any tribal village in India of today. As Ray says, "howsoever removed in time, both in appearance and artistic form the Mohenjodaro girl can easily be imagined to have emerged from any tribal village in India at any given moment of her long history".<sup>a</sup>

## V

It should now be evident that Harappan art belonged to a social complex in which West Asian and East Mediterranean strains were as potent as the autochthonously Indian ones; the former fixed and conventional and operative, presumably among the small but dominant communities, and the latter, fresh and imaginative and operative at the lower levels of the society, composed presumably of the larger autochthonous tribal and peasant communities. This hypothesis is strongly borne out by the planning of the two cities and their architectural remains and other finds.

The Indus cities were reared up on grid plans with straight roads crossing one another at right angles. The blocks of houses in the main city com-

<sup>a</sup> Niharranjan Ray, *Idea and Image in Indian Art* (New Delhi, 1973), p. 99. ∴

plex were inhabited by people belonging to the upper classes: the ruling authorities, the priests, the merchants and the more important artisans. Those not so privileged, were accommodated in small hut-like rooms in regular blocks outside the main city complex; these were presumably the people who used to fill the huge State granaries and do other chores of urban life which the labouring class usually does. Still outside of this complex was the thinly occupied area presumably of tribal units, people who used to attend to still lowlier occupations. It is significant that the granaries, the private and public baths, the underground sewerage etc. were all situated in the main city complex.

The conclusion is perhaps irresistible that here was an urban complex characterized by "class division and division of labour, based upon the rule of a few over many",<sup>9</sup> and that the few who constituted the dominant minority, belonged to an urban bourgeois community used to the luxuries of life. If the anthropometry of the skeletal remains recovered from the main city area are any guide, this small but dominant community was Mediterranean in origin and affiliation, and its members entered into the Indus valley on the pretension of international trade and commerce. But this small dominant community could not evidently subsist by themselves; they needed various grades of labouring communities including certain tribal ones which were locally available.

If art is a form of social activity through which a given society articulates its ethos, psyche, volition and will, it is only likely that the various social grades that went into the composition of the structural complex of Harappan society, should be reflected in the objects of art produced by that society. This is what seems to have actually happened. Speaking in a rough and ready manner, the more conventional but sophisticated potteries, the intaglio seals, the bearded busts, the Harappa dancing male, for instance, seems to reflect the ethos, psyche etc. of the dominant minority, while the terracotta female figurines and animals, the vegetal and animal decorations and narrative paintings, the Mohenjodaro dancing girl and the male torso, for instance, reflect the ethos, psyche etc. of the indigenous working communities and the tribes.

## VI

It is perhaps permissible at this stage to formulate certain working hypotheses with regard to the nature and character of Harappan society in the light of the evidence of Harappan art and in the context of the material conditions of Harappan life.

<sup>9</sup> D. H. Kosambi, *The culture and civilization of India* (London, 1965), p. 54.

*First*, despite there being a king who seems to have been the nucleus of the Harappan social hierarchy, just as he was in other West Asian societies, it is curious that neither at Harappa nor at Mohenjodaro is there any evidence of what one might call a royal palace, indeed of any structure where the king could make an appearance from or give audience to his people or receive homage or tributes. There certainly existed a separate fortified area adjacent to the best group of houses, but this area does not seem to have dominated the entire city complex. In fact, the Harappan king and the royal authority do not seem to have enjoyed such total domination over Harappan society as did their counterparts in contemporary West Asian societies. The Harappan king's spiritual and temporal authority made but little impact on the total life complex; hence there was no impact on art either. This would explain why there was no monumental architecture or sculpture at either Harappa or Mahenjodaro while West Asian cities could boast of both. We have evidence of enormous accumulation of wealth in the form of gold, silver and precious stones recovered from both the Indus cities, but this wealth does not seem to have been used for making any monumental residential palace or temple or any other structure which could impress and overawe the populace.

*Secondly*, the bourgeois elite of Harappan society seems to have cared but little for art. The seals and engravings constitute good evidence of high craftsmanship, but this glyptic art seems to have been a conventional official art in which the motifs and symbols remained constant through the centuries. Piggott's characterisation of Harappan society as a 'conserving' one is perhaps correct, since Harappan society seems to have done very little more than merely conserve the different cultural strains that flowed into it, more or less in the same manner as it had received it from time to time. The same remarks would apply to the art of the potteries, with but few exceptions. The terracottas, the red stone torso and the cast-metal dancing girl from Mohenjodaro may be said to have been the only objects which seem to reflect the theme, form and spirit of what one may call a popular art. But private resources must have been too scanty for an active popular art to flourish. Nor do the artists and craftsmen seem to have been commissioned to work within the acropolis in the service of a monarch, which would perhaps explain why objects of sculptural art of any significance are so scarce.

*Thirdly*, while certain decorative patterns and designs on the potteries, the motifs and symbols on the seals, the form of the bearded busts etc., were derived from West Asia and conserved in the two cities of the Indus valley for centuries, it is strange that they never took root in the soil and were never integrated into the fabric of Harappan life, not to speak of later Indian life of historical period. The Indus valley lay very close indeed to West Asia,

and it is nothing strange that certain strains of West Asian art and life would flow into India, but it must be recognised that Harappan culture as a whole was no transplantation of Mesopotamian culture; the local, indigenous strains were as strong, and these cannot be ignored, especially at the rural base, which has already been pointed out.

*Fourthly*, the life and culture of the Harappan complex, as manifested in the terracotta female figurines, animal figures and the dancing girl from Mohenjodaro, seems to have remained very much the same, at any rate till the first few centuries of the Christian era, and even after. Many of the Harappan terracotta female figurines, for instance, belong to the "timeless"<sup>10</sup> mother-goddess type which came to have a continuous, unbroken tradition in India during the historical period. This type of terracotta mother-goddess was popular in West Asian and East Mediterranean regions as well, but the fact that the type persists in the India of today, as a household goddess, leads one to assume that the Harappan type may have had an indigenous origin. There is no doubt, however, that a great deal of interaction took place between the Indian and West Asian culture. The kind of elaborate head-dress and horns that one finds in quite a few Indian examples of both pre-historic and historical periods, must have been derived from Mesopotamia, and the *pippal* leaf, humped bull, cobra etc. that one notices in West Asian art must have had their source in India.

*Fifthly*, no attempt seems to have been made to integrate the two trends of art in Harappan culture, one, the West Asian and the other, the autochthonously Indian, the two belonging to two distinct aesthetic visions and treatment. When much later in history, Indian art of the historical period comes fully to view, some of the autochthonously Indian art-forms of the Indus valley seem to have manifested and asserted themselves, while some of the West Asian and Mediterranean forms which seem to have survived, enjoyed a brief spell in Mauryan court art and then, sporadically, here and there, as for instance, in Sunga and Kusan art.

But the mists of time between the art of the Indus valley and that of early historical India, are as yet too thick and impenetrable to admit of any reasonable and convincing historical connection or explanation. What however seems somewhat certain from what we already know of Harappan culture, is that Harappan life and society were not stabilized, integrated, creative and enlivened enough by myths, legends, customs, values etc. to leave any abiding legacy for later Indian art and life of the historical period.

<sup>10</sup> Stella Kramrisch, "Terracotta Art", in *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, VII (1939), pp. 89-110.



# The Later Vedic Phase and the Painted Grey Ware Culture

R. S. SHARMA

THE later Vedic texts comprising the collections of the *Yajus* and *Atharvan*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, and the *Upaniṣads* were composed in the land of the *Kurus* and *Pañcālas*.<sup>1</sup> This coincides with the major portion of western Uttara Pradesh, almost the whole of Haryana, and the neighbouring parts of the Panjab. From the climatic point, along with the eastern portions of Rajasthan this whole area constitutes one unit having the same kinds of plants and trees. We may list a few trees which are mentioned in the Vedic texts and are at present found in the region. *Udumbara*<sup>2</sup> (Hindi *gular*) is found in this region and also in other parts of the country. *Karīra*, a leafless shrub, is found along the banks of the Yamuna in the Mathura area.<sup>3</sup> *Pīlu*,<sup>4</sup> a tree on the fruits of which doves feed, is found in the same region. The *jujube* (Hindi *ber*) trees such as *karkandhu*,<sup>5</sup> *kola*,<sup>6</sup> *kuvala*,<sup>7</sup> and *badara*<sup>8</sup> are found in good numbers in the whole area. *Pitū-dāru*<sup>9</sup> or *putudru*,<sup>10</sup> a name for *devdār*, is found in the foothills of the Himalayas. *Plakṣa*<sup>11</sup> (Hindi *pākar*), a tree with wavy leaves with small white fruits, is found in this region as well as in eastern India. *Varaṇa*<sup>12</sup> (Hindi *varanā*) is found in Haryana in good numbers. *Vikankata*,<sup>13</sup> identifiable with *kaṭāi* and *śāmī*,<sup>14</sup> identifiable with *choṅkar*, are found in the region of our study. So far the plant-remains of the levels belonging to the first half of the first millennium B.C. have not been impressive, and hence an integrated study of the later Vedic plants on the basis of archaeology and geographical provenance cannot be pursued far. But there is considerable evidence to show that the flora of the later Vedic texts is identical with that of the *doab* and the adjacent areas.

The Painted Grey Ware sherds have been found in the same areas as are represented by the later Vedic texts. Although the PGW wares have been noticed in eastern UP and even in Bihar, their epicentre seems to be



the upper Ganga and Sutlej basins. However there is nothing like an exclusive PGW culture because other wares such as black-and-red ware, black-slipped ware, red ware, and plain grey ware are also associated with them. Although very distinctive otherwise, at Atranjikhhera where the PGW covers an area of about 650 square metres, its incidence ranges between three and ten per cent of the total pottery complex.<sup>15</sup> Even where their number is fairly large, the PGW sherds may not exceed fifteen per cent of the total pottery recovered from the PGW levels. Thus the PGW horizon represents a composite culture, just as the culture revealed by the later Vedic texts represents an amalgam of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic, Āryan and non-Āryan elements.

The dating of the PGW levels coincides with that of the later Vedic texts. Although some enthusiasts would like to push back the date of both the PGW and iron on the basis of a single carbon dating from Atranjikhhera, the overall picture comprising both the origin and the diffusion of the PGW covers a period of less than five centuries from *circa* B.C. 900. This also seems to be the case with the compilation of the later Vedic texts. Keith would like to place all the *Brāhmaṇas* between 800 and 600 B.C.,<sup>16</sup> but Louis Renou is possibly right to extend the period of the later Vedic texts including the *Upaniṣads* up to 500 B.C.<sup>17</sup> The dates of the Vedic texts were fixed by Sanskritists on the basis of linguistic considerations, the appearance of Vedic names in inscriptions of about the fourteenth century B.C. in western Asia and on the basis of the appearance of the Indo-European speaking people in Western Asia and Europe. The coincidence that the later Vedic texts seem to have been compiled in the age of the PGW can be rendered meaningful by a comparison of the material cultures revealed from these two sources.

The PGW mud-brick walls found at Hastinapura<sup>18</sup> remind us of later Vedic references to bricks in connection with the construction of altars; seven brick names are found in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, nine in the *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā*, and eleven in the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā*.<sup>19</sup> In the *agnicayana*, the stacking of the bricks for the fire altars which is made obligatory in the *mahāvratā* and optional in other *soma* sacrifices, the building of the *uttara-vedi* involves five courses of bricks, making 10,800 bricks in all in prescribed patterns often in the form of a bird with outstretched wings.<sup>20</sup> But neither the PGW archaeology nor the later Vedic texts know of fire-baked bricks. Of course a battered facing of brick on the mud ramparts of *Kauśāmbī* has been discovered, but it cannot be pushed beyond 550 B.C.<sup>21</sup> In fact the find of a cast copper coin may bring down its date to around 300 B.C. Therefore the bricks mentioned in the Vedic texts were not baked in the fire. A potter's kiln of the PGW level has been discovered in Atranjikhhera.<sup>22</sup> Such a kiln

is known by *āpāka* (Hindi *āvā*) in the Vedic texts, but no term for brick-kiln is found in the Vedic sources. The old Vedic practice of using unbaked bricks for religious purposes continues in Maharashtra and possibly in other parts of the country. The total picture of PGW settlements does not warrant their characterisation as urban, as has been done by Wheeler;<sup>23</sup> towards the end of the PGW period they can be called proto-urban at best. The later Vedic texts do not know of urban life. *Kāmpīla*,<sup>24</sup> the capital of *Pañcāla*, may have been an administrative settlement. The term *nagara* occurs in an *Āraṇyaka*<sup>25</sup> and the *nagarin*<sup>26</sup> in two *Brāhmaṇas* which are not earlier than 600 B.C.

Technologically the PGW period is distinguished by the use of iron implements comprising spears, arrowheads, hooks, etc. Consistent C-14 datings do not make them earlier than *circa* 850 B.C. The use of iron in the later Vedic texts is indicated by several terms. Iron objects recovered from Atranjikhra implies advanced knowledge including the use of the bellows. *Bhastrā*, which became a common term for bellows in post-Vedic times, is interpreted as a leather container in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,<sup>27</sup> but it may imply the acquaintance of the people with the bellows towards the end of the Vedic period.

Several terms for iron are found in the late Vedic texts. The term *śyāma* occurs in the *Vājāsaneyi Saṃhitā*,<sup>28</sup> the youngest of the *Yajus* collection, which might belong to about 800 B.C., for it is later than the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*.<sup>29</sup> The term *śyāmena* is found in the *Atharva Veda*, IX.5.4. and *śyāma ayas* in XI.3.1. 7; but these books are part of the priestly literature rather than of "popular poetry", and are possibly later in time.<sup>30</sup> Since in its present form the *AV* is certainly the latest of the four *Saṃhitās*,<sup>31</sup> these references cannot be attributed to a period earlier than 800 B.C. The terms *kṛṣṇāyas*, *kāṛṣṇāyas* occur in *Jaimini Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, II.90, which is later than the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*,<sup>32</sup> and may be later than 600 B.C. Curiously enough the Egyptian word for iron is black copper from heaven,<sup>33</sup> which is almost the same as *kṛṣṇāyas*. Similarly glass beads and bangles found in the PGW levels<sup>34</sup> have their counterparts in the term *kāca* in the Vedic texts.<sup>35</sup>

On the basis of the iron objects that have been discovered so far in the Panjab, Haryana, western UP and the adjoining areas of Rajasthan in the levels belonging to *circa* B.C. 800–500 we cannot postulate their use in handicrafts and agriculture on any considerable scale. In this phase only arrowheads and spear-heads supplemented by nails<sup>36</sup> have been encountered; axes, hoes and sickles are rare, and ploughshares are completely absent. It was therefore primarily an age of iron weapons and not of iron tools. Since the Upper Gangetic basin does not have any rich iron mines, and since the

evidence for the use of bellows seems to be doubtful,<sup>37</sup> the number of weapons was limited, and most probably they were in the sole possession of princes and nobles.

The PGW deposits, which are at several places four to five metres deep, leave no doubt that these settlements lasted for at least three to four centuries. Their relative stableness, their richer context indicating increase in population suggest that they were inhabited by agricultural communities. The late Vedic texts speak of four, six, eight, twelve and even of twenty-four oxen being yoked to the plough<sup>38</sup> which may indicate yoking of more than two oxen to break the hard soil. The importance of field-agriculture was realised, and the ploughshare made of *khadira* was asked in prayer to confer cows, goats, children and grain on the people.<sup>39</sup> It seems that the ploughshare made of *khadira* or *katthā*, which is called very hard and compared to bones in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,<sup>40</sup> was used on a considerable scale. But in the *Atharva Veda* the plough is described as *paviravant*<sup>41</sup> or *pavarivam*,<sup>42</sup> which is interpreted as having a metal share like that of lance;<sup>43</sup> this was possibly an iron share. Similarly, in recitation an instrument called *kuṣī*, an article made of metal or wood, was used for marking.<sup>44</sup> In later times the term came to mean an iron ploughshare and is still used in that sense in the dialects of western UP, the Panjab and Haryana. But we do not get any iron ploughshare in the PGW levels. In the age of the *Rg Veda* ploughshares of *khadira* and *udumbara* were used. The practice continued into later Vedic times, and the ritual is still observed in the Banaras area. According to it, before the start of ploughing, a small piece of land is furrowed with the wooden share attached to the plough.

A few implements found at Atranjikhhera<sup>45</sup> appear like reaping hooks, but no iron sickles have been found in the family books of the *Rg Veda*. *Dātra* appears in its late portions,<sup>46</sup> and is used for both a reaper and a sickle meant for cutting. Its derivative *dā*, *dāu*, etc. means a large agricultural cutting tool in north-eastern India, but in Haryana and the neighbouring regions its derivative *darāntī* means a sickle for reaping. *Sṛṇī* is another term for reaping sickle found in the late portions of the *Rg Veda*, and also in the *Atharva Veda*,<sup>47</sup> but the term is not widely used. It is significant that the later Vedic texts specifically use the term *lavitra*<sup>48</sup> for the reaping hook or reaping the crops. But we have no exact idea of the material of which these sickles were made. All told, the PGW/late Vedic people practised field-agriculture, but iron does not seem to have played any role in it.

In the age of the *Rg Veda*, *yava* or barley was produced. Barley ripens quickly and does not require much rain. Therefore the sole dependence of people on it suggests that they lived from hand to mouth because of a lack of knowledge of the other crops. But besides barley, rice and wheat<sup>49</sup> have

been found in the PGW levels at Atranjikhhera. All these are attested by later Vedic texts which know of barley, rice (*vr̥hi*), bean-pulse (*māṣa*), and sesamum (*tila*); millet (*śyāmāka*)<sup>51</sup> is also mentioned.<sup>52</sup> In the Vedic texts another name for paddy crop is *ṣaṣṭika*, which ripened in sixty days.<sup>53</sup> An inferior type of rice, it survives now as *sāthī* in almost the whole of northern India.<sup>54</sup> The fact that this variety is used in Hindu rituals in preference to the other varieties shows that it was the earliest type of cultivated rice. *Godhūma* or wheat found in the PGW levels appears in several later Vedic texts,<sup>55</sup> but so far bean, sesamum and millet have not been discovered in the PGW levels. However besides wheat, barley and rice, lentil, black gram (*urd*), green gram (*mung*), grasspea and linseed have been reported from chalcolithic levels in Madhya Pradesh.<sup>56</sup> The cultivation of rice in western UP might be explained by the fact that in ancient times this area had a heavier rainfall and much waterlogging. The continued use of rice in Vedic rituals<sup>57</sup> is also explained by this fact; on the other hand it is significant that wheat has no place in these rituals.

Animal remains from Atranjikhhera include bones of cattle and other animals bearing cut-marks and leave no doubt that they were used for food. Animal bones from Hastinapura show that young cattle were used as food.<sup>58</sup> Sacrifices prescribed in the later Vedic texts indicate the killing of cattle and other animals on a large scale, and animal food is an important item in the life of the Vedic people. Sacrificial altars have not been discovered so far, although such a claim is made for *Kaṁsāmbī* in connection with the *puruṣamedha*.

Although the remains of horse have been found at Hastinapura,<sup>59</sup> it is not clear whether the animal was used for food. So far the remains of horse have not been recovered from any other PGW site. Horse-goods belonging to about c. 900 B.C. have been reported from the Gandhara graves.<sup>60</sup> In any case the importance of horse and chariot is attested by the *RV* and more so by subsequent Vedic texts which prescribe a place for horse in the *asvamedha*, *rājastīya*, *mahāvata*, etc.

To the PGW levels belong a good number of pots. It is thought that they were used for eating by members of the upper classes, but some of them may have been used for cooking; of course the point can be established only if marks of soot are noticed on them. Others may have been used in rituals which formed a striking feature of the later Vedic religion. It is not possible to produce corroborative evidence from the Vedic texts regarding the colour and fabric of these pots, but something can be said about their types. The two typical PGW pots are bowls and dishes; we do not meet with *hāṇḍis*, which became a widely prevalent cooking pot in subsequent times. It is remarkable that the later Vedic terms *ambarīṣa*,<sup>61</sup> *ukha*,<sup>62</sup> *kandu*,<sup>63</sup>

*sthālī*,<sup>64</sup> *bhrāṣṭra*,<sup>65</sup> stand for frying pans, resembling broadly the dishes that have been discovered. These recall to our mind the pots in the red ware found in the PGW levels. *Kumbha*<sup>66</sup> was meant for storing water and *kośa*<sup>67</sup> for storing grain; these again may have been non-PGW pottery. *Kuṇḍa* seems to be the term used for bowl,<sup>68</sup> and the term *kuṇḍa-pūyin*<sup>69</sup>, drinker from the bowl, is used as a proper name. *Sarāva* is another name for bowl,<sup>70</sup> which was also used for measuring corn. According to the *Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra* (II.4.27-34) a small bowl or cup was indicated by the word *kapāla*, because of its resemblance to the skull;<sup>71</sup> sacrificial offerings were placed in it. Many of the PGW bowls may have been used for ritualistic purposes, and they remind us of the later Vedic *kapālas* meant for offering sacrificial cakes to gods.

The terms for cooking pots in later Vedic texts suggest that frying was an important form of cooking, and this purpose was served by the dishes that have been discovered. Some inference regarding the use of the PGW and other dishes can be made from the size of the ovens that have been discovered. The Atranjikhra PGW level hearths are semi-oval in shape and 25 to 30 cms in height.<sup>72</sup> An oval-shaped hearth, partly underground, was found in the PGW level at Kaseri in the district of Meerut.<sup>73</sup> The hearths from Ahicchatra belonging to the earliest phase of the NBP period, into which the PGW merges itself at this place, are underground ovens.<sup>74</sup> In the case of both Kaseri and Ahicchatra we should find out whether the size of the PGW level pots matches with the PGW ovens.

The rows of hearths discovered at Atranjikhra in the PGW levels as well as the sets belonging to post-PGW levels at Ahicchatra show that these were meant for communal feeding or for cooking the food of large families. A hearth showing one mouth and three openings was found in Atranjikhra besides another hearth on a kitchen floor belonging to the period of overlapping of the Painted Grey and the NBP Wares.<sup>75</sup> Obviously these hearths were meant for feeding a large family. In the case of the hearth at Ahicchatra<sup>76</sup> as many as three cooking pots can be placed at a time on the multiple ovens. The multiple hearths with baked brick wall from Purana Qila from the 'Maurya' levels<sup>77</sup> can take four pots at a time. A row of four hearths has been found at Ahar,<sup>78</sup> but these are rectangular and above the ground, and not oval and underground, as is the case with the Kaseri and Ahicchatra hearths as well as the 'Maurya' hearths from Purana Qila. The term *bhrāṣṭra* or *bhrāṣṭra* in the Vedic texts<sup>79</sup> throws some light on the communal character of the later Vedic hearths. This term is interpreted as frying pan,<sup>80</sup> but it might mean a large cooking fire, for almost in the entire western UP, Haryana and the Panjab its derivative *bhaṭṭhī* stands for ovens meant for cooking food on the occasion of communal feasts, although *bhaṭṭhī* or

*bhaṭṭhā* is also used for brick-kilns. My inquiry shows that the traditional *bhaṭṭhī* erected for communal feeding in western UP is invariably subterranean and is semi-oval in shape. This may be a survival of the PGW hearth corresponding to the Vedic *bhraṣṭra*/*bhrāṣṭra*.

The later Vedic phase is marked by the predominance of sacrificial rituals, conducted by priests and mainly meant for tribal chiefs and princes, in which laying the fire invariably plays an important part and is also prescribed for the *vaiśyas* or peasants. Archaeological evidence for this practice is scarce in the PGW levels. 'Fire-altars' in the form of shallow oval or rectangular pits have been reported from Amri, Lothal and Kalibangan,<sup>1</sup> and possibly they continued in some form in the subsequent centuries. Circular firepits discovered at Atranjikhera in the PGW levels<sup>2</sup> may have served sacrificial purposes. Horizontal excavations are likely to expose more of the firepits, which may have been borrowed by the PGW people from the preceding cultures.

All told, the stage of the material equipment of the PGW phase, called as such because of the distinctive character of this pottery, is comparable on many counts to the material culture of the later Vedic texts. We notice the beginnings of territorial state formation, advent of social stratification, and the emergence of administrative machinery, in the later Vedic texts; all these presuppose a full-fledged agrarian society, not typical of the *RV* phase. Although a good portion of the geographical areas covered by the *RV* overlaps the area covered by the later Vedic texts and PGW culture, the fact that the *RV* people were mostly pastoral, used neither iron nor glass, and cultivated only barley, rules out the possibility of their being equated with the members of the PGW culture. On the other hand we have a good case for employing the PGW archaeology for the study of the Vedic culture. If this position is accepted, the combined method can help us to form an integrated picture of society and economy in the first half of the first millennium B.C. in the Sutlej and upper Gangetic basins.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Vedic Index*, i. 165-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 139.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 535.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 189.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 173.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 59.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* i. 534.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 205.

- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. 294.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. 355.
- <sup>15</sup> R. C. GAUR, "The Painted Grey Ware at Atranjikhra—An Assessment", *Potteries in Ancient India*, ed. B. P. Sinha (Patna, date not mentioned), pp. 185–86.
- <sup>16</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, i, 131–32.
- <sup>17</sup> *Vedic India* (Calcutta, 1957), p. 38.
- <sup>18</sup> B. B. LAL, "Excavation at Hastinapura and other Explorations in the Upper Ganga and Sutlej Basins 1950–52", *Ancient India*, nos. 10–11, p. 13.
- <sup>19</sup> G. R. SHARMA *The Excavations at Kauśāmbī, (1957–59) The Deccans and the Syenaciti of the Puruṣamedha*, University of Allahabad (1960), p. 101.
- <sup>20</sup> RENOU, *Vedic India*, pp. 110–11.
- <sup>21</sup> WINFLEDER, *Early India and Pakistan* (London, 1959), p. 130.
- <sup>22</sup> *IAR*, 1963–4, p. 49.
- <sup>23</sup> *Civilizations of the Indus Valley and Beyond* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 102.
- <sup>24</sup> *VI*, i, 149.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid. 432.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> I. 1.2.7; 6.3.16 quoted in *VI*, ii, 99.
- <sup>28</sup> XVIII. 13.
- <sup>29</sup> B. K. GHOSH, *History and Culture of the Indian People*, ed. R. C. Majumdar; i, 232.
- <sup>30</sup> RENOU, *Vedic India*, pp. 20–21.
- <sup>31</sup> B. K. GHOSH, op. cit., 232.
- <sup>32</sup> WILHELM RAV, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien* (1957), p. 27.
- <sup>33</sup> CHARLES SINGER, E. J. HOLMYARD & A. R. HALL (ed.), *A History of Technology*, i (Oxford, 1951), 594, fn. 1.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ancient India*, nos. 10–11, 91, 94. In addition to Hastinapura, glass objects from the PGW levels have also been reported from some sites in the Panjab.
- <sup>35</sup> *Kaṣṭhala-Kaṣṭha Samhata*, XXXI. 9; *SBr.*, XIII.2.6.8; *Taittirīya Br.*, III.9.4. 4–5; all these references are quoted in M. G. Dikshit, *History of Indian Glass* (Bombay) 1969, Appendix II, p. 162.
- <sup>36</sup> *Indian Archaeology—a review*, 1958–59, pp. 54–55; 1962–63, pp. 31–34; 1971–72 [unpublished], *Excavations and Excavations*, para no. 52 (Ms with Archaeological Survey of India).
- <sup>37</sup> The term *bhasṭra* is used in the *SBr.*, I.1.2.7; 6.7.16, in the sense of leather-container (*VI*, ii, 99).
- <sup>38</sup> All the references from the *AT*, *TS*, *Kāṣ*, *MS* and *SBr.* are quoted in *VI*, ii, 451.
- <sup>39</sup> *AT*, X.6.23.
- <sup>40</sup> XIII.4.4.9.
- <sup>41</sup> *AT*, III.17.3 & *TS*, XII. 71 quoted in *VI*, i, 309.
- <sup>42</sup> *TS*, X.2.5.6; *MS*, II.7. 12, *Kāṣ*, XVI, quoted in *VI*, i, 509.
- <sup>43</sup> *VI*, i, 509.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid. 173; R. L. Turner, *A Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages* (Oxford, 1966), no. 3367.
- <sup>45</sup> *IAR*, 1965–66, plate LXX; several of the objects illustrated in this plate appear to be sickle or reaping hooks, but they have not been identified.
- <sup>46</sup> VIII. 78.10; *Nirukta*, II. 1 in *VI*, i, 384.
- <sup>47</sup> I.58.4; X.101.3; in *VI*, ii, 471.
- <sup>48</sup> III.17.2 quoted in Rajchandra Mishra, *Atharvaveda Me Sāṃskṛitah Tatva* (Allahabad, 1968), p. 147, fn. 3. (in Hindi)
- <sup>49</sup> *lunāli* in the sense of 'reaps' in *TBr.*, *lavana* in the sense of reaping in *Kāty. Sr.*, and *lantra* in the sense of sickle in Pāṇini; all quoted in Turner, op.cit., nos. 10986–10988.
- <sup>50</sup> G. M. BUIH & K. A. CHOUDHURY, "Plant Remains from Atranjikhra Phase III (1200–600 B.C.)", *The Palaeobotanist* XX, no. 3 (1971), 286.
- <sup>51</sup> *Vṛhishattvam yavamatho māśamatho tilam*, AV, VI. 140.2.
- <sup>52</sup> *AT*, XX.135.12.
- <sup>53</sup> *VI*, ii, 345.
- <sup>54</sup> TURNER, op cit, no. 12806.
- <sup>55</sup> MONIER-WILLIAMS, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p. 365, col. 1.
- <sup>56</sup> H. D. SANKALTA, *Prehistory and Protohistory of India and Pakistan* (Poona, 1974), pp. 460–61.
- <sup>57</sup> s.v. *puṛodās*, *VI*, ii, 4 & Monier-Williams, op. cit. *AT*, VI. 140.2.
- <sup>58</sup> B. B. LAL, op. cit., pp. 107–20.

- <sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 109.
- <sup>51</sup> B. K. THAPAR, "The Aryans: A Reappraisal of the Problem", *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, ed. Lokesh Chandra (Madras, 1970), p. 150.
- <sup>52</sup> Ambarīṣa is the name of a person in *RI*, I.100.17; *VI*, i, 31; in the sense of frying pan see Monier-Williams, op. cit., s.v. *ambarīṣa*.
- <sup>53</sup> Used in the sense of saucepan or cooking pot in *AI*, XII.3.23, *TS*, etc., quoted in Monier-Williams, op. cit., s.v. *ukha*; cf. *VI*, i, 83.
- <sup>54</sup> MONIER-WILLIAMS, op. cit., s.v. *kandū*; cf. Turner, op. cit. nos. 2726 & 2728.
- <sup>55</sup> MONIER-WILLIAMS, op. cit., s.v. *sthāṇi*, VI, ii, 487.
- <sup>56</sup> MONIER-WILLIAMS, op. cit., s.v. *bhrāṣṭra*; Turner, op. cit., no. 9656.
- <sup>57</sup> *VI*, i, 103; Shivaji Singh, "Vedic Literature on Pottery", *Potteries in Ancient India*, p. 301.
- <sup>58</sup> In the ritual *kośa* appears as a large vessel to hold *soma*, as opposed to *kalaśa*, *VI*, i, 189; *kuvāla* appears as a storage jar in *Pāṇini* IV.3.36 (*Potteries in Ancient India*, p. 267).
- <sup>59</sup> For the sense of bowl-shaped vessel see Monier-Williams, op. cit., s.v. *kuṇḍa*; Turner op. cit., no. 3264.
- <sup>60</sup> *VI*, i, 160-61.
- <sup>61</sup> *VI*, ii.
- <sup>62</sup> SINGH, op. cit., p. 304 & fn. 60.
- <sup>63</sup> *IAR*, 1963-64, p. 49.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid. 1969-70, p. 43.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid. 1963-64, p. 44, Plate XXVII.
- <sup>66</sup> *IAR*, 1965-66, p. 47, Plate XXXIII.
- <sup>67</sup> *IAR*, 1963-64, Plate XXVIII.
- <sup>68</sup> Picture of 17/70-71 PQ (Kindly shown to me Dr M. C. Joshi).
- <sup>69</sup> H. D. SANKALIA, *Prehistory and Protohistory of India and Pakistan*, p. 107 and Fig. 117.
- <sup>70</sup> TURNER, op. cit., no. 9656; Monier-Williams, op. cit., s.v. *bhrāṣṭra*.
- <sup>71</sup> TURNER, op. cit., no. 9656.
- <sup>72</sup> SANKALIA, op. cit., p. 350.
- <sup>73</sup> *IAR*, 1963-4, p. 49.





# Social Background of Ancient Indian Terracottas

(CIR. 600 B.C.-A.D. 600)

DEVANGANA DESAI

TERRACOTTAS or baked clay figurines, which appear to be spontaneous handiwork of the simple folk, can be produced on a large-scale only when certain social conditions are fulfilled. Their making involves "technical equipment at an artisan level which goes beyond the independent domestic pattern of production" and is possible in a society which is well-settled and differentiated into specialized professions including that of potters. It is undertaken when there is a demand arising from institutionalized religious cults which require the use of clay figurines as votive offerings, magical charms or household deities, and from a public who would buy secular figurines and plaques for decoration of homes, toys for children and varied other purposes. Such religious and secular demands for terracottas can be efficiently fulfilled on a large-scale in urban societies. The large-scale terracotta production is closely related to the process of urbanization and the development of markets. The establishment and the growth of well-organized markets, the most essential feature of the urban economy, is a stimulus to the expansion of industries in general including that of terracottas.<sup>1</sup>

The history of terracottas in India shows that the large-scale production is associated with the rise and flourishing of urban cultures. The early settled cultures of Baluchistan and Afghanistan begin to produce terracottas in their later stages when they were evolving from village to town level and when religion was institutionalized. Large-scale production of terracottas is seen in the urban culture of the Indus valley. It is significant to note that comparatively very few terracottas are found from the village settlements of the post-Harappan Chalcolithic cultures, although these were river valley sites with

easy availability of clay. Similarly, there is a conspicuously scanty production of terracottas among communities of the Ochre Coloured Pottery and the Painted Grey Ware.<sup>3</sup> Terracottas appear again with the second urbanization in northern India from *cir.* 600 B.C. and are seen on a mass-scale from 200 B.C. to A.D. 300 when the urbanization was at its peak. But they became less popular in the post-Gupta period with the decay of towns and decline in urban culture. Terracottas of ancient India are the art and ritual objects of an urban culture that flourished from about 600 B.C. to A.D. 600.

From *cir* 600 B.C. there was a ferment in the social climate of northern India which was a part of the ferment of the Iron Age in the civilized world from the Mediterranean to the Jaxartes in Central Asia. The regular use of iron technology ushered in a process of gradual urbanization in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley which reached its peak in the period after 200 B.C. The use of iron implements in agriculture and in the clearance of dense forests made agricultural production on a large-scale possible hitherto unknown in earlier periods. With extensive agricultural cultivation a surplus was created which was large enough to sustain non-agricultural groups. Specialization in industries and crafts became possible, which gave an impetus to trade. Transport was made more efficient because of better equipment. Coins began to appear for the first time in the levels associated with the Northern Black Polished Ware (550 B.C.–200 B.C.) in many sites of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.<sup>4</sup> The use of coins, in its turn, brought revolutionary changes in social and economic life. Even small artisans and workers could save for future use and amusements. Manufacture of cheap goods for popular consumption became profitable with money-economy. Commodity production developed considerably with coinage.

Specialization and concentration of industry and crafts along with the growing volume of trade made the centres of production grow into busy towns. Vārāṇasī is such an example which became one of the six cities in Buddha's time by its specialization in textile industry. We find that gradually there were *jalapaṭṭanas* or towns where goods were brought by boats, *sthalapaṭṭanas* where goods were brought by roads, *dronamukhas* where goods were brought both by sea and land, *puṭabhedanas* or mercantile centres where seals of packed goods were broken, *panyapaṭṭanas* or market-towns and *rājadhānīs* or capital towns.<sup>4</sup> There were two long-distance trade-routes connecting a number of towns: Uttarāpatha or northern route from Rajgir to Pushkalāvati (Charsada), and a southern route from Rajgir and Śrāvastī to Pratiṣṭhāna. There were also four minor routes from Rajgir to Kapilavāstu, Śrāvastī, Campā, and to Kāliṅga.<sup>5</sup> Thus there was a network of towns and markets in the early historic period.

∴

The urban life created multifarious demands in response to which various industries and crafts sprang up. The Jātakas mention eighteen crafts which kept on increasing in number. The *Dīgha Nikāya* speaks of twenty-eight crafts and the Mahāvastu speaks of thirty-six kinds of workers. The *Milindapañha*, towards the beginning of the Christian era, enumerates seventy-five occupations and describes a busy town market.<sup>6</sup> Luxury industries such as perfumery, ivory-carving, fine textile industry, jewellery-making etc. considerably developed in the post-Maurya period.

Pottery was also recognized in ancient India as one of the eighteen industries and was undertaken on a large-scale. The deluxe pottery generally known as the Northern Black Polished Ware, produced by refined iron technology, was traded from Magadha (south Bihar) where major centres of its production were located, to far away places like Taxila. That it had reached several central Indian sites such as Kayatha, Ujjain and Besnagar by *cir.* 500 B.C. can be evidenced by Carbon 14 dates.<sup>7</sup> Trade in this fine pottery must have made potters rich. Besides this luxury ware, potters made red, black and grey wares as seen from excavations in Bihar sites. They also earned from the making of ring-wells which were used for sanitary arrangement in towns. An early Jain text, *Uvāsagadasāo*, speaks of one potter Saddalaputta who owned five-hundred workshops and had a large number of potters working under him. The *Mahāummagga* Jātaka refers to a potter's hireling, which suggests that there was a thriving business of potters. From the Buddhist literature we know that potters were well organized into guilds, and that there were villages (suburbs) of potters outside the gates of cities. Thus, there was a demand for the potter's craft in the urban culture of the period.

In understanding early Indian terracottas three points deserve special consideration. The first is that the terracottas that we have come across so far have been found from urban sites and have as their clientele the urban people whose needs, interests and tastes are reflected in them. Secondly, they were produced on a large-scale because there was a market for them. There was a demand for terracotta figurines both at religious and secular levels, which could be met because of the existence of a well-organized class of potters. Thirdly, tribal and peasant cults and rituals are represented in terracottas, but their treatment is marked by urban sophistication.

We shall study here in a broad outline the social history of terracottas. Terracotta-making is viewed as a social process in the context of the art loving public and the potter-artist of the period. The period *cir.* 600 B.C.–A.D. 600 has been divided into five sub-periods on the basis of socio-economic and political changes. These are (i) *cir.* 600–320 B.C.; (ii) *cir.* 320–200 B.C.; (iii) *cir.* 200 B.C.–A.D. 50; (iv) *cir.* A.D. 50–300; (v) *cir.* A.D. 300–600.

I. *cir.* 600–320 B.C.

We find a few specimens of terracottas of this period before the consciously organized movement in art begins under the Mauryas. As there is a controversy among art historians about the existence of terracottas in the pre-Maurya period, it is best to give data from archaeological excavations of sites. The pre-Maurya terracottas are found mainly from sites in Bihar. Among the earliest are terracottas from Buxar, ancient Charitravana on the Gaṅgā, in Shahabad district. Here four animal figurines and two human figurines have been found from pre-N.B.P. and pre-coin level of period I.<sup>8</sup> From Pāṭaliputra (Patna), which was Magadhan capital from the fifth century B.C., we have human figurines and *nāgas* (snakes) from its pre-coin, earliest level of period I.<sup>9</sup> From Vaiśālī (Basarh in Muzaffarpur district), the Licchavi capital, we get terracotta *nāgas* in its pre-coin and pre-N.B.P. level of period I.<sup>10</sup> From Champā, five km. west of Bhagalpur, we get a terracotta *nāga* (female) from its early N.B.P. level, dated by the excavator to sixth-fifth century B.C.<sup>11</sup> From Chirand in Saran district and Sonpur in Gaya district *nāga* figurines have been found along with N.B.P. ware.<sup>12</sup> At Chirand, this phase is pre-structural.

The *nāga* figurines found at Vaiśālī, Pāṭaliputra, Champā, Sonpur and Chirand are stylized and show an iconographic form consisting of hood of a snake and human body. There are punched circlets for breasts and navel and incised lines to mark parts of the body (fig. 1). The figurines were possibly used as votive offerings or as images in the *nāga* cult. So powerful must have been this cult in this region and other parts of the Middle Gaṅgā Valley, that it survived for more than 700 years, as we can see terracottas of the same form and style up to the Kuṣāṇa period.

The Mother goddess cult was yet to develop in its full-fledged form. The female figurines are not widely prevalent in this period. The Buxar female figurine (fig. 2) has a round face, wide eyes which are incised, punched ear-lobes, prominent breasts and perforations over the head for decoration.<sup>13</sup> This type is also seen from Pāṭaliputra (Patna Museum, Arch. No. 4330 from Kunrahar) and Kauśāmbī.<sup>14</sup> That this type of female was associated with a Mother Goddess cult is certain, as we have another example of such a hand-made female from Buxar (fig. 3) who is sitting on a stool and holding a child in her left hand (Patna Museum, Arch. No. 6303). There is another type of animal-faced hand-made figurine from Pāṭaliputra<sup>15</sup> (fig. 4). The excavators identify the figurines as males, but the punch-marks for breasts and navel indicate that they are females.

All the terracotta figurines of this period are hand-made. They are not decorative or artistic in intent and are not produced on a large-scale. The

society had not yet reached the stage of commodity production. The process of urbanization had just begun, but it had not made much of an impact on the cultural life of the people. It will be noticed that figurines from Buxar,

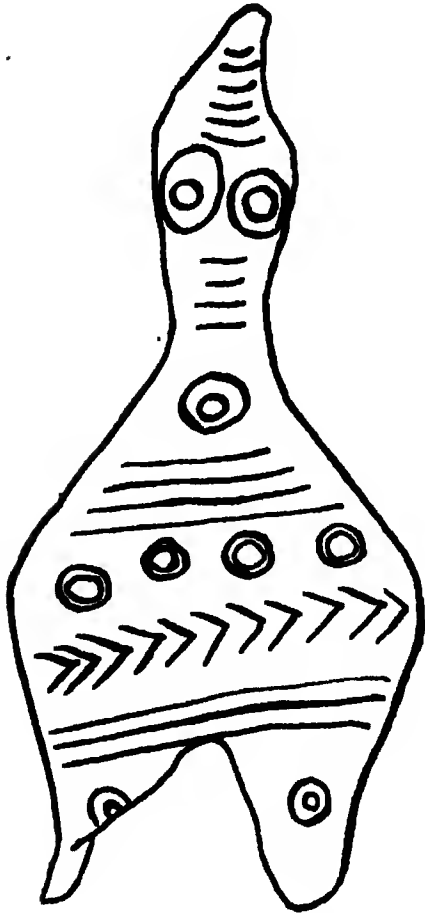


FIG. 1. A *nāga* figurine from Patna



FIG. 2. A pre-Maurya Mother Goddess from Buxar, excavated from pre-N.B.P. level



FIG. 3. A pre-Maurya Mother Goddess from Buxar

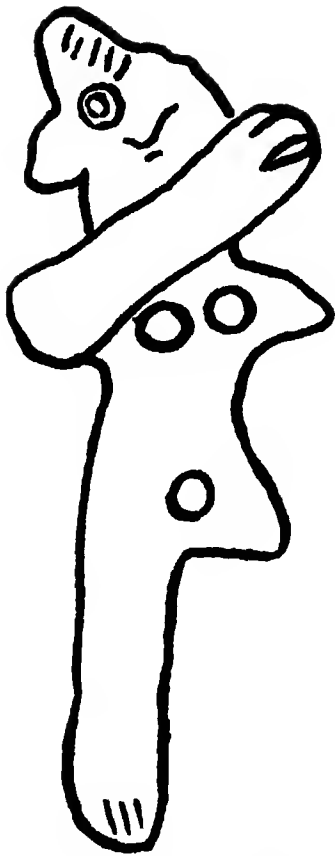


FIG. 4. Pre-Maurya Goddesses of Pataliputra

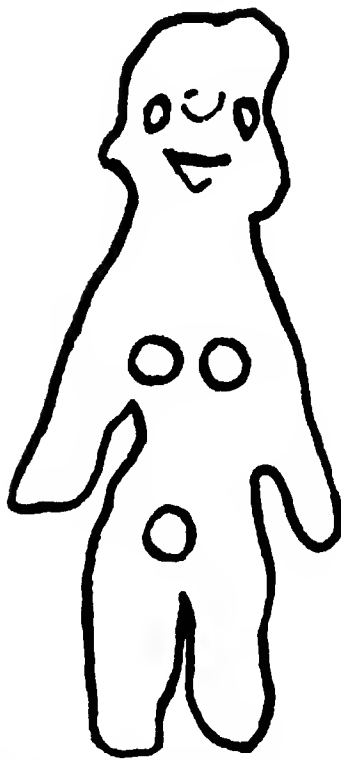


FIG. 5. A Dancing Girl from Bulandibagh, Patna

Pataliputra and Vaisali have been obtained from pre-coin levels. Earlier traditions and Chalcolithic technology continued along with iron tools and N.B.P. ware in several sites of Bihar.<sup>16</sup> This probably explains the archaic nature of terracottas in this period.<sup>17</sup>

## II. *cir.* 320–200 B.C.

The tribal and peasant cults continue in the Maurya period, but for the first time we see terracottas as objects of art. Secular and artistic terracottas are mainly confined to Magadha (south Bihar) which had become the most important economic and political centre of India under the Maurya empire. As Prof. Niharranjan Ray has shown, court influence was the pre-dominating feature of the Maurya art in stone, commissioned by King Asoka for the propagation of Buddhism. The tall and elegant columns with their naturalistic perfection in animal sculpture reflect austerity and dignity of the royal court, and also the love of foreign art, Achaemenian and Hellenis-

tic.<sup>17</sup> The Mauryas had established diplomatic and economic ties with West Asiatic and Hellenistic countries. So great was the influx of foreigners in the Maurya capital, Pāṭaliputra, that, as Megasthenes notes, the municipal board had to set up a special committee to look after them.

Foreign influence is reflected in terracottas of Pāṭaliputra (Bulandibagh, Patna) "with definitely Hellenistic heads and faces, Hellenistic modelling and, in a few cases, also Hellenistic drapery".<sup>18</sup> They remind us of the Tanagra terracottas of the fourth-third century B.C.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis on drapery and elongated physique is a common feature of both Pāṭaliputra and Tanagra figurines.

These dancing girls and graceful ladies of the Maurya capital (fig. 5) breathe the air of urban sophistication with their smooth and sensitive modelling, dynamic dancing movements, delicate neck, and rich, probably starched, drapery. They reflect the tastes and interests of the royal family and the *śreṣṭhin* class who had acquired a dominant position in the social life of the period. As these terracottas are large and fragile, they could not have been preserved in small houses or huts of the common folk. They were meant for decorating large palaces of royal and aristocratic families, and were most probably produced by *rājakumbhakāras* or royal potters of whom Pāṇini speaks about.<sup>20</sup> These potters did not produce for the market but produced for the individual needs of the royal family. The *Cullakasetṭhi Jātaka* also refers to a king's potter. There were artisans attached to wealthy *śreṣṭhins* also.<sup>21</sup>

We may mention here that the Maurya date of the Patna dancing figures is sometimes questioned by art historians. But the find of a similar figure from Sonpur (Gaya district) in its period II along with N.B.P. ware shows its Maurya date, while figurines of period III at Sonpur show Śuṅga characteristics.<sup>22</sup>

Sophistication in its highest form is seen in terracottas of Buxar mainly representing fashionable ladies with elongated foreign facial features and elaborate hair-styles in numerous varieties.<sup>23</sup> The foliage and floral designs in their ornaments and head-dresses suggest that they could be females associated with vegetation and agricultural rites (fig. 6). Pāṇini informs us that the *Śālabhañjikā* festival was peculiar to the eastern people. From the Buddhist literature it is known that the people plucked *Śāla* flowers and celebrated the festival amidst merry-making. We learn from the literature (*Meghadūta*) of a later period that in a similar vegetation festival of *Aśoka-bhañjikā*, *Aśoka* leaves were worn on the ears by the girl, who performed this rite of rejuvenating the tree. The Buxar figurines with floral and foliage motifs seem to be a sophisticated version of fertility maiden.

Along with these urbanized figurines, we also see a continuation of





FIG. 6. A female figure with vegetation motifs. Buxar

archaic forms in terracottas. The *nāga* figurines seen in the earlier period continue to appear in several sites of the Middle Ganga Valley. They retain the linear abstraction and stylized form of the earlier period. The *nāga* worship on the new and full moon days was known to Kautilya. He says that persons knowing Atharvavedic magic should perform auspicious rites in honour of snakes to ward off their danger (*Arthaśāstra*, IV-3).

The cult of the Mother Goddess was widely prevalent in the Maurya period the evidence of which is found not only from terracotta figurines but also from numerous stone discs representing the goddess, sometimes with her partner.<sup>24</sup> Such discs are found in a number of sites from Bihar to the Punjab and Taxila. The largest number of Mother Goddess terracotta figurines are found at Mathura, which, in the Maurya period, became an important terracotta-making centre outside Magadha. Here Mother Goddess figurines (fig. 7) have been found along with N.B.P. ware and coins in the early and middle phases of period II.<sup>25</sup> Their archaic and vital form is altogether different in idiom from Magadhan figurines. The inspiration is clearly religious. There is no emphasis on drapery as in Patna figurines. The Mathura figurines represent a fat steatopygous female, with prominent breasts, an applique collar or necklace, an applique girdle often punch-marked or incised, and a well-marked navel. The earlier examples have animal or bird-like face which is replaced by moulded oval face in later ex-

amples (fig. 8). Rosettes and large round earrings are peculiar decorations of this type of goddesses.

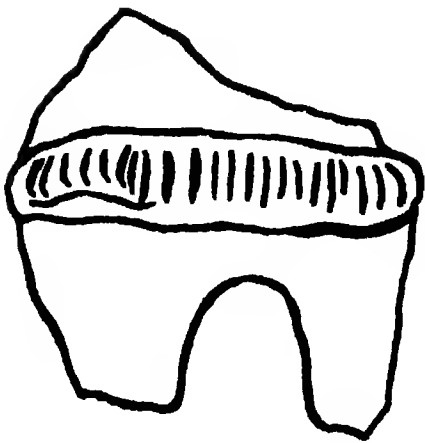


FIG. 7. Maurya Mother Goddesses from Mathura

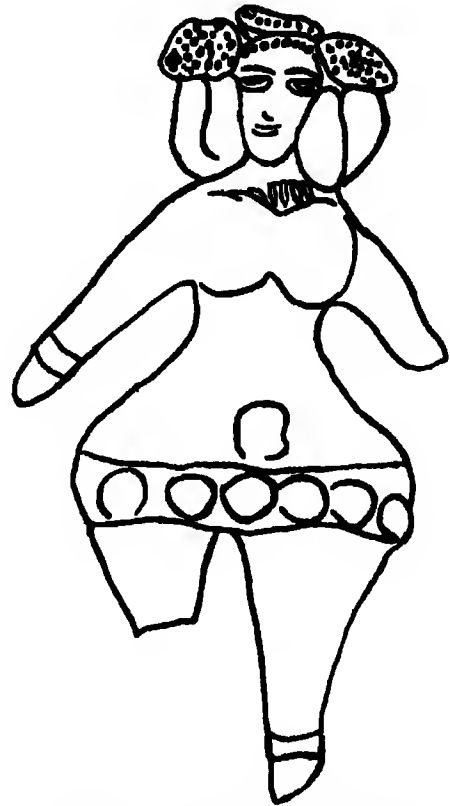
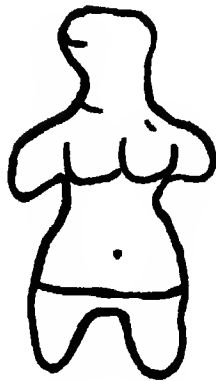


FIG. 8. A Maurya Goddess from Mathura

The Mathura types of the goddess are seen in several sites of Uttar Pradesh. V. S. Agarwala has pointed out the similarity of Ahicchatrā figurines (stratum VIII) (fig. 9) with those of Mathura.<sup>26</sup> A figurine showing a broad-jewelled girdle from Hastinapur (mid-level of period III) is similar to one of the types of the goddess of Mathura.<sup>27</sup> Saraimohana near Vārāṇasī (period I-B with N.B.P. Ware)<sup>28</sup> and Vaiśālī (early level of period II)<sup>29</sup> also show a Mathura type of female figure with applique necklace and girdle and incised eyes (fig. 10). Similarly, Masaoṇ<sup>30</sup> near Vārāṇasī has, along with N.B.P. Ware and punch-marked coins, female figures with pinched up nose, big neck and prominent breasts, which have resemblance to Mathura figurines. Similar figurines have been found at Kauśāmbī.<sup>31</sup>

We may mention here that Charsada (Puṣkalāvātī) in Gandhāra on the junction of several trade-routes, has typical Mother Goddess figurines of smooth and levigated clay excavated from the levels dated between *cir.* 250 B.C.–100 B.C.<sup>32</sup> But these figurines with small breasts, applique eyes resen-



FIG. 9. Mother Goddesses from Ahichchhatra



FIG. 10. A Maurya Goddess from Sarai-mohana

bling inverted shells, and without an indication of navel are different from female figurines of Mathurā and Pāṭaliputra.

A popular theme in the Maurya period is animals: elephants, horses, rams, bulls, dogs, etc. Animal figurines of Pāṭaliputra, Buxar, Vaiśālī, Mathurā, Hastināpur and Atranjikhara are meticulously decorated as in cases of ceremonial animals. The decoration consists of the prevalent applique technique and punch-marked and incised circlets. It is interesting to see that the animal figurines of Mathura have rosette motifs similar to those seen on the Mother goddess figurines. Elephants of Hastināpur and rams of Vaiśālī are decorated with vegetation motifs reminding us of the same motifs on the Buxar female figurines. It is possible that animal terracotta figurines were connected with Mother goddess worship. The contemporary stone-discs show animals such as lion, elephant, horse, ram and deer surrounding the goddess. Animal figurines may have been also used as toys. The *U'ssantara Jātaka* refers to toys consisting of horses, bulls and elephants.

Thus we see that in the Maurya period secular and artistic figurines have been mainly confined to Magadha whereas other sites of the period have generally ritual figurines. The monopoly of the Magadhan state in economic and political field and the resultant social inequality are reflected in terracottas of the period. The royal society and the upper class of Magadha

commissioned special potters to produce artistic terracottas resembling Hellenistic figurines, whereas the country outside Magadha was producing crude terracottas for cults and rituals. Magadhan (Patna, Buxar) terracottas have been found from Kauśāmbī, Bhita and Rajghat, but the reverse is not the case.<sup>33</sup> This indicates that the Magadhan terracottas were popular in other regions and possibly also that they were traded. Candraketugarh and Tamluk in Bengal have some specimens of this period, but these also show influence of the Magadhan style. The economic and political centre of gravity was located in Magadha which dominated the cultural scene in this period.

### III. Cir. 200 B.C.–A.D. 50

There is a spectacular and unprecedented growth of terracotta industry in this period as a consequence of the rapid progress of urbanization. Numerous centres between Bengal and the Punjab come into prominence. The rule of the Śuṅgas which followed the imperial Mauryas lasted for a short time. After Puṣyamitra Śuṅga's death in the middle of the second century B.C. we see the rise of numerous small kingdoms of Kauśāmbī, Kośala, Mathurā, Pāñcāla, etc. having independent coinage system. The political and economic dominance of the Magadhan state broke down and the surplus was widely distributed among other regions. Even private individuals amassed considerable wealth.

The vigorous trade and the growth of numerous industries and crafts accelerated the pace of urbanization. The literature of the period records a larger number of industries and crafts than those noted in the *Arthaśāstra*.<sup>34</sup> The growth of trade and industries considerably improved the position of the mercantile and artisan groups. The ruler's control over artisans was weakened by the increase in the number of guilds. The heads of artisan guilds, the *jeṭhakas* were accorded high social status by the king. Artisans worked as independent persons and earned cash income in contrast to *dāsa*s and *karmakāra*s who worked for getting food and clothes.<sup>35</sup> The payment in cash naturally served as an incentive to the artisan to work hard and produce enough to cater to the demands of the market.

The demand also increased as the purchasing power of the people increased. In the Maurya period it was mainly the royal house and wealthy *śreṣṭhins* that indulged in art and luxuries. In this period there were many other sections of people who were in a position to afford luxuries. There was now a class of *nāgarakas* (citizens) who had leisure and money to afford art. Even common people including potters, ivory carvers, masons and weavers had money to spend on decoration of religious monuments, as evidenced from the inscriptions of Bharhut and Sāñchī. In respect of terracottas,



FIG. 11. Pañcacūdā Goddess with five symbols in head-dress. Tamluk, about 2nd-1st centuries B.C.

there were more people to buy them, not only for religious but also for decorative purposes.

The potter in this period had to meet the mass demand for terracottas. This he was able to do by adopting the mould technique in the manufacture of terracottas. The adoption of this technique gave such a great boost to the production that terracotta making rose to the level of an industry. Terracottas became commodities for the market. The direct control of the royal patron over the potter was weakened in this period. An impersonal relationship of the potter and his clientele developed through the agency of the market.

The use of the mould was also made possible because the public was not particularly interested in the individual creation of an artist. The reproduction of the same subject and composition did not affect the market value of terracottas.

The adoption of moulds in terracotta production facilitated the depiction of narrative and illustrative themes in which the public were interested. The round figures of the earlier period gave place to compositions in flat reliefs, consisting of several figures. Exhaustive details of dress, ornaments, coiffure, etc. were minutely worked out in terracotta plaques as in ivory-carving. Even the stone art reflects the same mental attitude and the same formal principles of style. The gap between the stone and terracotta art

almost disappears in this period. One can see much similarity, for instance, between the stone reliefs of Bharhut and the clay art of Balirajgarh in Bihar.<sup>36</sup> There is, however, a difference in the thematic content of these arts, as their functions are different.

Religious themes are represented in a large number of terracotta plaques, but their treatment is influenced by urban sophistication. Almost all the excavated sites have yielded female figurines associated with the Mother Goddess and vegetation cults. But the goddesses are decorative female figurines in urbanized garbs. Instead of the primitive archaic goddesses of the Maurya period, we have beautifully decked and richly bejewelled female figures with elaborate hair styles. Nudity is often shown through their transparent fine apparel. Fine textiles and a large variety of rich ornaments which we have seen in this period were possible because of the growth of industries of luxury. So many ornaments are rarely represented in art of other periods.

Śrī-Lakṣmī, the goddess of prosperity, wealth and beauty became a popular goddess with the rise of commercial and mercantile communities. Her representations are seen in numerous terracottas of Tamluk, Candraketugarh, Bangarh, Harinarayanpur, Lauriya Nandangarh, Kauśāmbī, Mathura, Awra, etc. Another auspicious goddess Vasudhārā, probably related to Anāhitā, who holds two fish in her hand, became popular in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal. The cult of the goddess with five *āyudhas* or weapons in hands (fig. 11) who may be called *Pañcacūdā* for convenience, was widely prevalent from Bengal to Punjab (Rupar). The representation of her partner in plaques of Ahicchatrā (ph. 1) and Candraketugarh suggests that she was a fertility goddess whose ceremonial or symbolic marriage was celebrated for the general welfare of the community and for agricultural and vegetation fertility,<sup>37</sup> as in the West Asiatic cultures. The male partner of the goddess holds a musical instrument reminding us of the role of music in fertility rites. There is another vegetation goddess at Mathurā, Kauśāmbī, Ahicchatrā, Rajghat, Rupar, etc. who has elaborate hair dress with palm fronds or corn sheaves. Auspicious and fertility symbolism are shown in association with goddesses of this period. They touch their own *mekhalā* (girdle) or earring, hold flower in one hand, hold two fish, wear auspicious symbols in head-dress and have symbolic amulets and ornaments.

Several male deities also make their appearance, not only as the consorts of the goddess but also as independent figures. We see plaques representing Sūrya (Chirand, Candraketugarh), winged deity (Vaiśālī, Kauśāmbī, Balirajgarh, Candraketugarh, Tamluk) and squatting *yakṣa* figures probably representing Kubera (Candraketugarh, Kauśāmbī, etc.). There are also male figures standing on wheeled ram, elephant and horse.



FIG. 12. Satavāhana heads from Nevasa

The cults of these gods and goddesses were associated with festive gatherings (*samājas*) in city gardens (*nagaropavana*), which become a favourite subject with the terracotta-public. In urban atmosphere, remote from the actual relation with nature and growth of plants and corn, the celebration of these fertility festivals tended to get secularised and sensualised. They were treated as *krīdās* (sports), to use the word from the *Kāmasūtra*, for such fertility festivities. The garden party scenes of Mathurā breathe secular air (ph. 2). Similarly, a plaque from Kauśāmbī (ph. 3) showing a richly dressed couple sitting on a chair manifests urban tastes and vision in its depiction and seems to be associated with the sophisticated *nāgaraka* class.<sup>48</sup> The ritual significance is retained by showing the woman touching her own earring which is a symbolic gesture associated with fertility goddesses such as Śrī.

The taste of the *nāgaraka* class is reflected in some of the plaques showing *goṣṭhī* or cultural parties (Kauśāmbī), wrestling, animal-fights (Kauśāmbī), palace scenes, ladies decorating themselves (Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Rajghat), a well-dressed *nāgaraka* with a parrot in hand, a *nāgaraka* with elephant (Candraketugarh), a child writing an alphabet (Haryana), *Kāmasāstrīya* scenes (Chandraketugarh, Tamiluk, Bhita, Kauśāmbī), love-making couples (Kauśāmbī, Sankisa, Mathurā, Ahicchatrā), Udayana-Vāsavadattā theme (Kauśāmbī), etc. The vast array of themes is baffling. The potter-artists of the period have succeeded in presenting the dynamic quality of popular culture in terracottas.

IV. Cir. A.D. 50-300

*Sātavāhana terracottas*

Active trade with Rome and the consequent commercial prosperity in southern regions created a favourable situation for the manufacture of terracottas during the early centuries of the Christian era. We see terracottas (kaolin figures) in a number of towns such as Kondapur, Yellesvaram, Nagarjunakonda and Chebrolu in Andhra Pradesh, Sannathi in Mysore, and Ter, Paithan, Kolhapur and Nevasa in Maharashtra.

From the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, we get detailed information about the maritime trade between India and the Roman empire and the number of ports and inland market towns which had come up as a result of this trade. The discovery of the Roman coins of the first century A.D. in south India and the well-known reference of Pliny of the drainage of gold from Rome to India indicate the favourable balance of trade and the resultant wealth and prosperity.

It is in this period of urbanization in the South that we get one of the earliest inscriptions referring to a guild of potters. This inscription from a cave at Nasik records that money was deposited with a guild of potters for the benefit of the Buddhist sect residing in the monastery.<sup>39</sup> This means that the potters who flourished in this period, were well-organized in a guild and that money was invested with the guild as in other commercial activities. Besides the fine pottery with red lustrous polish, potters also made beautiful bangles, amulets and beads, as a large number of these have been found from Sātavāhana sites. Kondapur and Maski were known for terracotta bead industry.<sup>40</sup>

Making of terracotta figurines with rich white clay called kaolin was also an industry which catered to the tastes and interests of the wealthy mercantile community. This is evident in the thematic content of terracottas, most of which is secular. Among the themes most popular, are joyous aristocratic men and women (whose heads are mostly found), wearing rich ornaments with neatly arranged coiffure (fig. 12). Another theme representing an aristocratic couple riding a horse reminds us of a similar motif on the capitals of the contemporary caves of Karle and Kanheri, though however there are stylistic differences. There are figurines representing a male riding a horse, children, *ganās*, and animals such as horses, rams, lions and buffaloes. These dainty figurines could not have been used as toys as they are too delicate for children's play. They seem to be decorative pieces.

The Sātavāhana terracottas have a totally different idiom from that of the northern Indian terracottas. The difference is not so much due to the adoption of the double mould technique in the South as the practice of



double mould was also prevalent at many places in the North such as Mathurā, Ahicchatrā Purana Qila, etc. It is rather the dainty forms and delicate workmanship of Sātavāhana figurines and the representation of a distinct ethnic type of features and physiognomy which distinguishes them from those of northern India.

The cultic figurines showing a nude goddess sitting with legs apart are Roman-Egyptian in inspirations and are found at Ter, Nevasa, Yellesvaram, Nagarjunakonda, etc.<sup>41</sup> That this cult was spread among the aristocracy is evident from an inscription at Nagarjunakonda which mentions a queen who was *avidhavā* and *Jivaputā* (with her husband and sons alive) in connection with this type of figurine. The image seems to have been dedicated by the queen as an offering for the fulfilment of certain desires.<sup>42</sup>



FIG. 13. A nāgaraka from Chandra-ketugarh, Kushan Period

### *Kuṣāṇa terracottas*

Under the Kuṣāṇas, India was materially a prosperous country having trade links with Rome and the Hellenistic west. A century before and after the Christian era, there were several invasions from the nomadic tribes—

the Śakas, Parthians and Kuṣāṇas as a result of events in central Asia. The period witnessed the acculturation process when foreign religious cults, motifs and forms were gradually being assimilated into the cultural pattern of India. Terracottas vividly document the interesting results of the mixing of cultures.

Two distinct trends are noticeable in the Kuṣāṇa terracottas. One is the continuation of the old tradition of moulded plaques as we saw in the Śunga or post-Maurya period. The other is the emergence of the new trend due to the cultural changes brought about by the influx of new races.

The older tradition of terracotta reliefs is widely seen at Candraketugarh, Tamluk, Rajghat, Kauśāmbī, Bhita and Mathura. There is a further improvement in the formal quality. The flattened reliefs of the earlier period give place to reliefs in depth. The themes reflect the tastes of the affluent *nāgaraka* class. We see a well-dressed gay *nāgaraka* (fig. 13) in a dancing pose (Candraketugarh), erotic plaques (Chandraketugarh, Bhita), a woman with parrot on the right hand (Kauśāmbī), a woman holding flowers (Mathurā), a *śālabhañjikā* under a tree (Kauśāmbī, Rajghat), a drunken woman helped by her paramour or husband (Ahicchatrā), etc. Some of the subjects are seen in Mathurā stone art.

The other trend in terracottas represents influence of the new races which had infiltrated into India. This second group of terracottas are mainly of two types, one produced by double moulds and the other modelled completely by hand. Seated *gaṇas* and *yakṣas*, grotesque figures, musicians and riders on horse back were produced by the double mould technique which gives depth and roundness to figures. However, the figures are often crudely produced, unlike the Sātavāhana terracottas of about the same period. They remind us of the Seleucian terracottas of the Parthian period.<sup>48</sup>

The completely hand-modelled figures were more widely prevalent and represented both religious and secular demands of the new public. The newly rising Brahmanical cults of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śāktism as well as Buddhism were supported by the foreign rulers. Religion was "humanised and emotionalised" as a result of the development of Bhakti (devotion). There was a demand for images of gods and goddesses for household worship. Several Hindu gods and goddesses received their shape and form in this period. Ekamukhī Śiva liṅgas are seen in large numbers at various sites such as Mathurā, Rajghat, Kauśāmbī, Bhita, etc. Balarāma, Viṣṇu, Kārttikeya, Gaja-Lakṣmī, Sapta Mātṛkās and Devī Mahiṣāsūramardīnī were seen both in terracotta and stone. Some of the sites of Bengal such as Bangarh produced powerful Mother Goddesses with archaic features. Buddha and Bodhisattva images appeared for the first time. Mathurā and Hastinapura have good terracotta Bodhisattvas.

Some of the foreign cults were assimilated into Indian religious practices. Parthian influence is seen in terracotta votive tanks enshrining a Mother Goddess surrounded by birds and musicians.<sup>44</sup> These votive tanks have been found from various sites such as Ahicchatrā, Hastinapura and Taxila (Sirkap). The cult of the nude goddess having Roman-Egyptian influence is represented in clay plaques of Bhita, Kauśāmbī and Jhusi.

The public of the period were interested in portraiture. From the dramatist Bhāsa who flourished in this period we learn about the *rājakula* housing statues of ancestors. Kuṣāṇa royal portraits in stone are well-known. In terracottas we see a number of heads (with tenons) of both men and women with expressive facial features (ph. 4). Sites of Uttar Pradesh have yielded better figurines compared to those of Bihar, as the centre of economic and political activity was now shifted to the north. Terracotta heads from Mathurā, Kauśāmbī, Bhita, Masaon, Atranjikhara, Ahicchatrā, etc. reveal the artistic talent of the potter. "Faces of female figures are characterized either by a smile or at least an animation noticeable on the cheek-bones set below a pair of flat wide-open eyes."<sup>45</sup> Some of the heads represent distinctly foreign ethnic features. But there are a number of crudely made heads having heavy and harsh facial features. One wonders whether they were meant to be portraits.

The appearance of a large number of crude and coarse terracottas is somewhat surprising, as this was a period of great prosperity. Numerous gold and copper coins were issued by the Kuṣāṇa rulers. Even the indigenous dynasties issued copper coins. As Prof. R. S. Sharma says, "This would suggest that perhaps in no other period had money economy penetrated so deeply into the life of the common people of the towns and suburbs as during this period, a development which fits well with the growth of arts and crafts and the country's flourishing trade with the Roman empire."<sup>46</sup> Urbanization was at its peak in this period. Most of the excavated sites show large brick structures and baked tiles for roofing and flooring.<sup>47</sup> Probably potters were preoccupied with the making of bricks, tiles and pots (red-ware) at the cost of the artistic quality of terracottas. It seems that new forms of images which were emerging in this period required a certain degree of experimentation, and hence hand-modelling was resorted to for the purpose. When the potter had to meet the large demand for terracottas raised by the increase in the purchasing power of the people as well as the increase in population, he was forced to pay attention to the production rather than to the quality of terracottas. However, he could afford to pay special attention to images and secular figures had he been paid more for these. Some of the portrait figures or heads representing noblemen and aristocrats are well-executed, specially at Kauśāmbī, Bhita, Ahicchatrā and Mathurā. It is for the first time that one

comes across the powerful intensity in the facial expression of Kuṣāṇa terracottas. It is not the ornamental quality but the massive and sturdy forms and expressive facial features that distinguish Kuṣāṇa terracottas from those of other periods.

V. Cir. A.D. 300-600

This is a period of transition when on the one hand there was a tremendous prosperity on account of industries and trade and on the other hand were appearing signs of decline leading towards feudal conditions. Along with the urban mercantile class which was prosperous and ranked high in social circles, a new class of landed aristocrats was coming up towards the end of the period on account of numerous land grants of the Gupta rulers and their feudatories. Land, rather than cash was becoming the medium of grants and rewards both in religious and secular spheres. Land-grants to Brāhmaṇas transferring revenue and surrendering police and administrative functions to the donee weakened the position of the state and led towards partial feudalisation.<sup>48</sup>

In this period of transition, when the upper classes—both the old commercial class and the newly emerging landlords—had amassed wealth, there was an overall development in the arts of the period—both visual and literary. Terracotta art reached the highest technical perfection and refinement in the Gupta period. A study of the Gupta terracottas (preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Vārāṇasī) has shown that they have superfine texture and do not have admixture of rice-husk in their clay. There is also an absence of air-holes and grit in the clay.<sup>49</sup> Again, for baking large-sized terracottas such as the Gaṅgā and Yamunā of Ahicchatrā there were large cylindrical pits for special kilns ten to twelve feet in depth.<sup>50</sup> *Lepya-karma*, terracotta manufacture, was an extant technical term in the artistic vocabulary of the period.<sup>51</sup> Perfection in terracotta and other arts was accompanied by the general improvement in techniques of metal working. Iron tools of this period show considerable improvement. Knowledge in iron technology had attained a high standard as seen from the Mehrauli iron pillar of Candragupta. That the position of the artisan class had improved can be inferred from the fact that they had to pay taxes now.<sup>52</sup>

Two distinct types of terracottas are seen in the Gupta period. The first consists of the moulded and modelled (heads of) figurines and small plaques used by individuals for household decoration or religious purpose. The second consists of the large-sized figures and plaques used for decorating temples and monasteries.

The first group seems to have catered to the tastes of the urban class,

the *nāgarakas*. In this group, most of the themes are secular, barring a few which are religious, such as Naigameśa and Hara-Gaurī. We come across beautiful and neatly produced heads of aristocratic men and women with varieties of fashions in the coiffure (fig. 14) which one can associate with the *nāgarakas* of Vātsyāyana who flourished in this period. They are found from various sites such as Vaiśālī, Rajghat, Bhitari, Bhita, Kauśāmbī, Jhusi, Śrāvastī, Ahicchatrā, Mathurā, etc. At Bhita, marks of paint are still visible on terracotta heads which indicate that they were often painted. The small reliefs found from various sites consist of *mithunas* Śrāvastī, Bhita, Rajghat, Mathurā), *Kinnara-mithuna* (Ahicchatrā), erotic scenes (Candraketugarh), lady with pitcher (Pāṭaliputra-Kumrahar, Masaon), mother and child (Vaiśālī, Bhita, Ahicchatrā), *śālabhañjikā* (Pāṭaliputra-Kumrahar). etc. *Gaṇas* and horse-riders are also found from numerous sites.



FIG. 14. Gupta heads from Ahicchatrā

On the other hand, we have large-sized figures and plaques associated with Brahmanical temples which were increasingly patronised by the newly emerging feudal class and which reflect the Smārta-Paurāṇic ideology and outlook. It is significant that the themes of epics which were known since at least a thousand years, now received sudden prominence in visual arts. Kṛṣṇa themes are seen in stone art from the Kuṣāṇa period and more widely from the Gupta period in terracottas of Rajasthan (Ranganmahal). The *Rāmāyana* scenes have been mainly found in terracottas from Śrāvastī in Uttar Pradesh, Chausa and Ashad in Bihar and Barehat in Madhya Pradesh. The *Mahābhārata* themes and Śaiva mythology are illustrated in terracottas of Ahicchatrā. Along with religious subjects, there are also secular scenes

on plaques. For instance, the palace scene of Mathurā in which a woman is seen in company probably of the Vidūṣaka. Most of the temples with terracotta decoration are in ruins. We get only loose plaques which must have once formed part of temple decoration. The extant temple of this period at Bhitargaon near Kanpur gives us an idea of terracotta ornamentation of temples (ph. 5).

In comparison with the terracottas of the first group which are sophisticated in outlook, the temple terracottas are more homely in character, more intimately connected with the daily life of the people and more playful in attitude. This is evident from scenes of the Bhitargaon temple depicting Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyī or Gaṇeśa running away with the *lāḍḍus* while his brother is chasing him, or Śiva and Pārvatī in a family scene (ph. 5). The same attitude pervades Rajasthan terracottas. On the other hand, spiritual quality is captured in the Buddhas of Mirpur Khas in Sind and to some extent of Devni Mori in Gujarat. Some of the large heads of Panna (Bengal) and Ahicchatrā also reflect equipoise and self-composed disposition.

Decorating a temple with large figures and plaques must have involved joint effort of several potters. A guild of potters rather than individual ones must have been entrusted with the work of decorating temples and monasteries. Again, the potters must have been in direct contact with their patrons unlike the case of small, moulded terracottas which were produced for the market.

The output of the small mould-made terracottas dwindled in the post-Gupta period with the decline of urban conditions. The rise of local units of production led towards self-sufficiency and minimised the exchange of goods and trade. Trade was also affected by the Hūṇa invasions. Decline of trade led to decay of towns which were the centres of crafts and commerce. The *Mṛcchakatika*, about the fifth century A.D., portrays the decline in prosperity of the merchant Cārudatta. In this play there is a trader of Pāṭaliputra who, because of the reverse of fortune had to migrate and to work as a shampooer in Ujjain. From the study of the archaeological material it has been shown that Pāṭaliputra, Vaiśālī, Chirand, Rajghat, Kauśāmbī Śrāvastī, Hastinapura, Mathura, Purana Qila and several towns in Haryana and the Punjab which had thrived in the Kuṣāṇa age began to decline in the Gupta period and almost disappeared in post-Gupta times.<sup>53</sup> With the decline of towns terracotta art lost its main clientele, the *nāgarakas*. Money economy was already shrinking in the Gupta period. There were numerous gold coins but copper coins used in daily transactions were less in number. Coins were becoming scarce from the times of Harṣavardhana. The purchasing power of the people declined. The class which could purchase terracottas in the market had almost disappeared.

With the decline of towns, artisans dispersed to the countryside. They became village-servants and received their share in kind and not in cash. Instead of producing for the market, they now produced for the village, the landlord, the Brahmanical temple or the Buddhist monastery which also possessed villages in large numbers and were feudal in character.<sup>34</sup> With the donation of villages, artisans came more and more under the domination of donors and had to perform forced labour. Their mobility was restricted to maintain the self-sufficiency of local units.

There was no scope for specialised production for the market. Terracotta was no longer the art of the people but was used by landed aristocrats and kings to decorate religious buildings and their own palaces on auspicious occasions like marriage, as recorded by Bāṇa in the *Harṣacarita*. Terracotta acquired the character of elite art and was preserved in feudal headquarters and religious centres such as Pāharpur (Bengal). Antichak (Bihar). Akhnur and Uskar (Kashmir). The main period of terracotta production was over with the decline of urban culture.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See also S. P. Gupta, "Sociological Interpretation of Ancient Indian Terracottas", *Proceedings of the 4th Annual Conference of the Indian Archaeological Society*, Nagpur, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Three terracotta animal figures have been found from the late phase of Painted Grey Ware (P. G. Ware) level of Hastinapur. (*Ancient India*, Nos. 10-11, 1954-55, pl. XLII, p. 86). The chronology of the late level of the P. G. Ware has now been revised to c. 800-600 B.C. The late levels of P. G. Ware and early levels of Northern Black Polished Ware (N. B. P. Ware) exist side by side at several sites. (D. P. Agarwal, *The Copper Bronze Age in India*, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 84ff, 102). If this is the case, the animal figurines of Hastinapur fall within the early phase of the period under discussion.

<sup>3</sup> A. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India*, Simla, 1973, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> MOH CHANDRA, "Architectural Data in Jain Canonical Literature", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 26, 1951, p. 172.

U. N. RAY, "prācīna Bhāratīya Nagara tāthā Nagara-Samvṛsa" (Hindi) *Gopinath Kaviraj Abhinandana Grantha* 1967, pp. 447ff.

<sup>5</sup> M. M. SINGH, *Life in North-Eastern India in Pre-Mauryan Times*, Delhi, 1967, pp. 236ff.

<sup>6</sup> R. S. SHARMA, *Sūtras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1978, pp. 180-81. A. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India (c. 600 B.C.-200 A.D.)*, Calcutta, 1945, Vol. II, pp. 206-07.

<sup>7</sup> D. P. AGARWAL, op. cit., pp. 102, 108.

<sup>8</sup> *Indian Archaeology—A Review*, (henceforward IAR) 1963-64, p. 8, pl. V-A.

<sup>9</sup> IAR 1955-56, p. 22, pl. XXXII-A.

B. P. SINHA and L. A. NARAIN, *Pataliputra Excavation, 1955-56*, p. 10, 41, pls. X, XVI.

<sup>10</sup> IAR 1961-62, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> B. P. SINHA in *Purātattva*, No. 6, 1972-73, p. 71, pl. IV.

<sup>12</sup> IAR 1959-60, p. 14; IAR 1963 64, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> IAR 1963-64, pl. V-A, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> IAR 1960-61, pl. LIX. The report does not indicate the date of the figurine.

<sup>15</sup> B. P. SINHA and L. A. NARAIN, op. cit., p. 41, pl. X.

<sup>16</sup> IAR 1960-61, p. 5; IAR 1968-69, p. 6.

DILIP CHAKRABARTI in the *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 15, 1972, pp. 216-18.

<sup>17</sup> NIIHARRANJAN RAY, *Maurya and Sunga Art*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1945.

<sup>18</sup> NIIHARRANJAN RAY in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 533.

# ANCIENT INDIAN TERRACOTTAS

- <sup>19</sup> T. WEBSTER, *Hellenistic Art*, London, 1966, pls. 13, 18.
- <sup>20</sup> V. S. AGARWALA, *Pāṇinikālīn Bhāratavarṣa* (Hindi), p. 223.
- <sup>21</sup> R. S. SHARMA, *Sūdras in Ancient India*, p. 89.
- <sup>22</sup> *IAR* 1961-62, pl. IV-A, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>23</sup> *IAR* 1963-64, pl. V-B, pp. 8-9.
- <sup>24</sup> DEVANGANA DESAI, *Erotic Sculpture of India, A Socio-Cultural Study*, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi, pp. 10-12.
- <sup>25</sup> *IAR* 1954-55, p. 15, pl. XXVI-A.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ancient India* No. 4, 1947-48, pl. XXXI-A, pp. 106-07.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ancient India* No. 10-11, 1954-55, pl. XXXVI-4.
- <sup>28</sup> *IAR* 1967-68, pl. XXIII.
- <sup>29</sup> SINHA and ROY, *Faisali Excavations 1958-62*, Patna, 1969, pl. XL-2 & 4.
- <sup>30</sup> *IAR* 1964-65, pl. XXXVI 1 & 15, pp. 42-43.
- <sup>31</sup> G. R. SHARMA, *Excavation at Kausambi*, pl. 44-53; S. C. Kala, *Bhāratīya Mṛttakalā* (Hindi), Allahabad, fig. 4.
- <sup>32</sup> MORTIMER WHITLER, *Chausada—A Metropolis of the Northwest Frontier*, Oxford, 1962, pp. 104ff.
- <sup>33</sup> S. C. KALA, *Terracotta Figurines from Kausambi*, Allahabad, 1950, p. 13.
- <sup>34</sup> R. S. SHARMA, op. cit., p. 180.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 181.
- <sup>36</sup> *IAR* 1962-63, pl. XI.
- <sup>37</sup> DEVANGANA DESAI, op. cit., pp. 90 ff.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 15, pl. XII.
- <sup>39</sup> *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. X, No. 1137.
- <sup>40</sup> G. YAZDANI in the *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, 1941, pls. XII, XIII a & c.
- <sup>41</sup> H. D. SANKALIA, "The Nude Goddess or 'Shameless Woman' in Western Asia, India and South Eastern Asia", *Artibus Asiae*, XXIII, 1960.
- <sup>42</sup> *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXIX, pp. 137ff.
- <sup>43</sup> W. VAN INGEN, *Figurines from Seleucia*, University of Michigan, 1939, p. 27.
- <sup>44</sup> V. S. AGRAWALA in *Ancient India* No. 4, pp. 125ff, Pls. XXXVIII, XXXIX; B. B. Lal in *Ancient India*, Nos. 10-11, pl. XLII.
- <sup>45</sup> NHIARRANJAN RAY in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 533.
- <sup>46</sup> R. S. SHARMA, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, Bombay, 1966, p. 78.
- <sup>47</sup> R. S. SHARMA, "Decay of Gangetic Towns in Gupta and Post-Gupta Times", *Indian History Congress* 33rd session, Muzaffarpur, 1972, p. 93.
- <sup>48</sup> R. S. SHARMA, *Indian Feudalism*, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 4ff.
- <sup>49</sup> S. K. SRIVASTAVA's article in *Chavi*, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras, Golden Jubilee Volume.
- <sup>50</sup> NHIARRANJAN RAY in *The Classical Age*, p. 556.
- <sup>51</sup> MOTI CHANDRA in the *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum*, No. 7.
- <sup>52</sup> R. S. SHARMA, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, p. 86.
- <sup>53</sup> R. S. SHARMA in *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. I, 1974, p. 5.
- <sup>54</sup> R. S. SHARMA, *Indian Feudalism*, pp. 127ff.





# ANCIENT INDIAN TERRACOTTAS



PLATE 1. A Goddess with partner, Ahichhatra, about 2nd Century B.C. (Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 2. A garden party with dance and music, Mathura, c. 2nd Cen. B.C. (National Museum, New Delhi)



PLATE 3. A couple from Kausāmbī, c. 2nd Cen B.C. (Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 4. A female head from Mathura, Kuṣāṇa period. (Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 1. Siva and Parvati in a family scene. A panel of the Bhitaragaon temple  
(Archaeological Survey of India)

# Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara

DEBALA MITRA

IN 1971 the Archaeological Museum of Nalanda obtained an exquisite stone image (no. 13102) of Avalokiteśvara which had been discovered in course of clearance in the area between Temples 3 and 12 at Nalanda.

The twelve-armed image (photos 1, 2, 3 & 4) is singular not only for its intrinsic artistic qualities but for its significant iconographic features. With its well-rounded plasticity and soft sensitive modelling, the sculpture is exceptionally refined and elegant. The rendering of the palms with the details of the artistic fingers of the Bodhisattva is arresting. Equally exquisite is the sublime expression of the face with its half-closed eyes (photo 2). The master artist has successfully been able to convey the idea of spiritual introspection, benevolence and pity, the characteristics of this *mahākāruṇika*. Stylistically, the image does not appear to be later than the eighth century A.D. But for the broken tip of the nose and the abraded lower part of the legs below the knees, the figure of the Bodhisattva is in an excellent state of preservation.

The Bodhisattva wears a long transparent *dhotī* with the end falling artistically to his left side in zigzag folds. The *dhotī* is held by a long ornate string, made up of roundels alternating with diamond-shaped flowers, the clasp being flower-shaped. A long folded scarf, encircling the thighs, is knotted near his right thigh, the ends hanging vertically by his right leg. The selected ornaments with which the Bodhisattva is elegantly bedecked are artistically designed, which enhances the beauty of the sculpture. They consist of beaded bracelets (one on each wrist) with a central piece in the

shape of a flower or a diamond, a beaded *hāra* (*ekāvalī*), a necklace of two strings (one beaded) held by an ornate pendant, elaborate beaded *kuṇḍalas* with *makara*-heads and flowers and a richly-embellished *mukuṭa* with ornate triangular projections having jewels and floral designs. With several locks of hair falling on shoulders, the hair is gathered on the crown in a high conical *jaṭā-mukuṭa*.

Against the front side of the *jaṭā-mukuṭa* is the figure of the Dhyanī-Buddha Amitābha in *dhyāna-mudrā*, seated in *vajra-paryāṅkāśana* on a lotus. Behind his back is an ovalish halo edged by tongues of flames.

Around the head of the Bodhisattva is a plain ovalish halo, projecting over which is an umbrella tied by streamers.

With a coiled circular mark on the forehead and an *upavīta* of two fine strings tied by a flower-shaped clasp, the Bodhisattva with a benign facial expression is standing in *sama-pāda* on a double-petalled lotus (damaged). There is a tenon below the pedestal.

All the visible palms bear clean lotus-marks. Of the six right hands of the Bodhisattva, the lowest (natural) right, resting against a full-blown lotus, displays *vara-mudrā*. In the next palm (thumb and index-finger touching each at the tip) is a jewel touched by the middle finger. While the hanging third palm is empty, the fourth palm exhibits *abhaya-mudrā*. In the raised fifth palm is a rosary. The topmost right palm is in *lathāgata-vandanā-mudrā*. Around this sixth palm are seen tongues of flames.

Of the six left hands, the topmost (natural) holds the stalk of a full-blown lotus. The second, third and fourth palms carry a hook, a staff with several branches (*tridaṇḍī* or *tridaṇḍaka*) and a *pāśa* (noose) respectively. In the fifth palm is a fruit. The lowest left hand bears a spouted long-necked water-pot.

Near the right leg of the Bodhisattva is an emaciated kneeling figure with supplicating palms, a swollen belly and shrunken face and limbs looking up towards the Bodhisattva. It represents Sūcimukha.

Next to Sūcimukha is the two-armed Tārā (photo 3) seated on a lotus with her left knee slightly raised up. With an exquisitely-modelled bodily features, half-closed eyes and placid and contemplative face lit up by a faint smile, she holds the stalk of an *utpala* with her left palm and a conical object (possibly fruit) in her right palm. Dressed in a diaphanous *sāḍī* held by a flower-shaped girdle and a pleated scarf covering partly her chest, the goddess is elegantly bejewelled with beaded bangles, armlets fastened by a flower-shaped clasp, a beaded *hāra*, a necklace of two beaded strings *kuṇḍalas* with flowers and a short *mukuṭa*. Fastened by a flower-shaped string, the hair is arranged in a bun. Behind the head is a plain oval halo.

The corresponding figure on the left side of the Bodhisattva represents

Bhṛkūtī (photo 4), full of vitality and blooming youth. With an elegantly-modelled body and a smiling face, the three-eyed goddess is seated in a half-kneeling posture on a lotus. Bereft of ornaments, she wears *jaṭā-bhāra* tied by a string and with a few locks falling on her shoulders. She is attired in a *sāḍī* fastened by plain strings and a pleated scarf covering partly her chest. Of her four hands, the raised upper right is *vandanābhinayī*. The broken palm of the lower right hand might have held a rosary. In her upper and lower left hands are a *tridaṇḍaka* and a spouted long-necked *kamaṇḍalu* respectively. Behind her head is a plain oval halo.

Between the goddess and the Bodhisattva stands Hayagrīva with his bent left leg partly behind the stretched right. His hands are crossed against the chest. The facial expression of the bejewelled figure is extremely fierce with pronouncedly contorted eye-brows, open mouth showing teeth and fangs and widely-open angry eyes.

Higher, above Bhṛkūtī, is a two-armed bejewelled goddess seated somewhat in *rājatilā* posture on the pericarp of a lotus with a single row of petals. Dressed like Tārā, she with a refined and graceful mien is extremely pleasing to look at. The ornaments include beaded anklets, bangles, armlets, a necklace, *kuṇḍalas* and a short *mukūṭa*. With her right palm displaying *vyākhyānamudrā*, she holds with her left palm the stalk of a damaged flower. From the circular outline of the flower it appears to have been a lotus; in that case, the goddess may represent Pāṇḍaravāsini. Behind her head is an ovalish halo.

The corresponding figure on the right side of the Bodhisattva is also a goddess, seated in a posture somewhat akin to *rājatilā* on a single-petalled lotus with a long stalk going down below. She resembles the former in dress, ornaments, smiling facial expression and bodily features. While her right palm with a small lotus on it rests on the right thigh, the left hand bears a book. Behind the head of this goddess of learning too is a plain oval halo.

Higher above her and at the top corner (dexter) of the back-slab is Amoghasiddhi seated in *vajraparyāṅkāśana* on a double-petalled lotus. With his body fully covered by a lower cloth and a scarf and a circular mark on the forehead, he exhibits *abhaya-mudrā* with his right palm and holds an end of the cloth or scarf with his left hand resting against the knee. Behind him is an oval halo.

The corresponding figure on the sinister is Ratnasambhava, seated also in *vajra-paryāṅkāśana* on a double-petalled lotus. His right palm is placed against the knee in *vara-mudrā*, while the raised left holds a part of the scarf which leaves his right chest and shoulder bare. Behind him also is a plain oval halo.

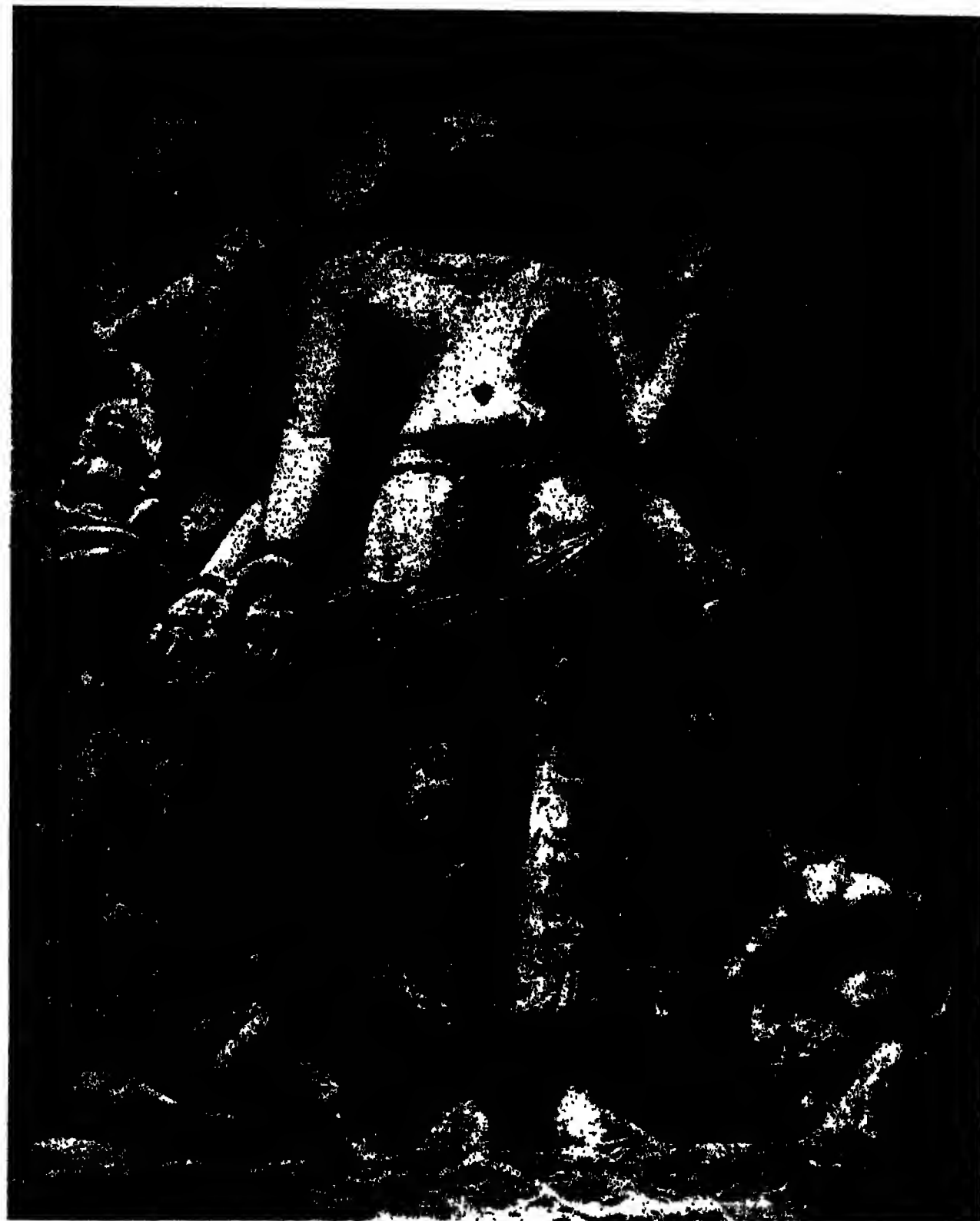
## II

I have not come across any *sādhana*s and ritualistic texts furnishing descriptions of the attributes of Avalokiteśvara in his twelve-armed form, exactly corresponding to those of the present image. None of the forms of the Avalokiteśvara, numbering as many as one hundred and eight, found in the paintings in Macchandar Vahal of Kathmandu (Nepal) and illustrated by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, conforms in all respects to this image. In fact, the twelve-armed form of the Avalokiteśvara is rather rare. The only form of this Bodhisattva with twelve arms in the prescription of the published *Sādhanamālā* is Māyājālakrama who has three eyes and five faces.<sup>1</sup> Terrible in appearance with fierce teeth displayed and decorated with bone ornaments and a garland of heads, this nude form is conceived as standing in *pratyālīḍha* posture. He carries in his right hands a *damaru*, a *khaṭvāṅga*, an elephant-goad, a noose, a thunderbolt and an arrow and in the left hands a skull-cup, a red lotus, a jewel, a wheel and a bow, the sixth left palm displaying *tarjanī*. Thus, conceptually and iconographically, the image under discussion is different from Māyājālakrama. Among the one hundred and eight forms of the Avalokiteśvara illustrated in the paintings of the Macchandar Vahal, three alone have twelve arms. They are Māyājālakrama,<sup>2</sup> Māyājālakramakrodha<sup>3</sup> and Vajrahuntika (?),<sup>4</sup> the last, with a single head and *utpalas* in all the twelve hands, dancing in *ardhaparyāṅka* attitude. The representation of the five-faced Māyājālakrama differs to some extent from the prescription of the *Sādhanamālā*. Thus, here the Bodhisattva is benign in expression and clad in a tiger-skin. Wearing a garland of heads, he carries in his right hands a *tridaṇḍaka* (or *triśūla*), a *khaṭvāṅga*, a jewel, a sword, a thunderbolt and a rosary and in the left hands a noose, a skull-cup, an *utpala*, a fruit, a wheel and a lotus. The five-headed Māyājālakramakrodha, as his name itself signifies, is extremely fierce in appearance with open mouths showing fangs, angry eyes and flame-like hair rising upwards and stands in *pratyālīḍha* attitude. Draped in tiger-skin, he bears in his right hands a sword, a thunderbolt, a goad, a noose, a *triśūla* and an arrow (?) and in his left hands a shield, a wheel, a jewel, a deer-skin, a skull-cup and a noose (in the palm) displaying *tarjanī*. Thus, the features and attributes of these two forms are also not applicable to the present image.

## III

The form which has the closest affinity with this image is that of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, a form which had been very popular in Java,

**TWELVE-ARMED AVAI. OKITESVARA**



**PLATE 1. Twelve-armed Avalokitesvara, Nalanda Museum**





PLATE 2. Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara: details of bust, Nalanda Museum

TWELVE-ARMED AVALOKITEŚVARA



PLATE 3. Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara  
details of Tārā. Nalanda Museum



PLATE 4. Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara: details of  
Bhṛkṣī, Nalanda Museum



PLATE 5. Buddha with a monk, Yaśodharā  
and Rāhula. Main Temple, Nalanda



PLATE 6. Details of the figure of the  
monk on Plate 5



PLATE 7. Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara. Indian Museum (No. N.S. 2076), Calcutta



PLATE 8. Twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara. Indian Museum (No. 3795), Calcutta

Japan, China, Tibet and Nepal and widely noticed by scholars. However, the published *Sādhana-mālā* does not prescribe any *dhyāna* for this particular form.

Pratapaditya Pal is the first scholar to publish two textual prescriptions for the eight-armed form of this Bodhisattva, one in a Nepalese manuscript of a text named *Amoghapāśa-Lokeśvarapūjā* (housed in the library of the University of Cambridge) and the other in a *sādhana* found in the *Tanjur*.<sup>5</sup> The Nepalese manuscript has been assigned to the eighteenth century A.D. on palaeographical considerations.<sup>6</sup> The *sādhana* in the *Tanjur* is said to have been composed by Śākyaśrībhadrā, who during his illness at Bodhi-Gaya had a vision of Amoghapāśa with his four companions; it was translated into Tibetan by Śes-rab rin-chen (Bibhūticandra).<sup>7</sup>

#### IV

In his two erudite articles published in the *Oriental Art*,<sup>8</sup> Pratapaditya Pal has made a survey of the representations of Amoghapāśa in various countries including Java, Japan, China, Tibet and Nepal, and has given an account of two stories associated with the rite (called *Upośadha* or *Aṣṭami-vrata*) of Amoghapāśa performed in Nepal. Two of the late *paṭas* illustrated by him present these stories. Again in the *Lamaist Art*<sup>9</sup> he briefly noticed another representation of the Bodhisattva on an eighteenth-century Tibetan *tanka* of the Ross Collection.

In his notice of the icons of Amoghapāśa from Java and Malaya, Pal noted the absence of the tiger's skin and the antelope-skin in the drapery of the Bodhisattva and the variable distribution of the attributes in hands. Ornaments are seen on the photographs published by him. One of the Javanese icons, possibly of Amoghapāśa, is ten-armed, the rest being eight-armed. In one example, the *tridaṇḍaka* is replaced by an ordinary staff. The eight-armed bronze image from Sungai Liput, Perak (Malaya), is seated in *lalitāsana*.

The representation of Amoghapāśa in the manuscript entitled *Chu Fo P'u-sa Shêng Hsiang Tsna* (housed in the National Library of Peking) and published by W. E. Clark<sup>10</sup> is four-armed. While the attributes in the upper right, upper left and lower left hands are a rosary, a *tridaṇḍaka* (resembling a *triśūla*) and a noose, the lower right palm displays *vara-mudrā*. Clad in a *dhotī* and a scarf, the single-faced bejewelled figure is seated in *vajraparyāṅkāśana*.

The figure of Amoghapāśa<sup>11</sup> included in the illustrations of the Pantheon of three hundred figures composed by the Chang Chia (Tibetan Lcan-skyā) Hutuktu Lalitavajra in the time of the emperor Ch'ien-Pung (A.D. 1736-96) is also four-armed, bejewelled, clad in a *dhotī* and a scarf

and seated in *vajra-paryāṅkāśana*. While the upper and lower right hands display *abhaya-mudrā* and *vara-mudrā*, respectively, the upper left hand holds a *triśūla*, the lower left, possibly a *pāśa*, resting on the lap.

The four-armed form of Amoghapāśa (Japanese Fukū-Kensaku Kannon) is said to exist in Japan where also there are six-armed, eight-armed and eighteen-armed images of this Bodhisattva. The earliest image of Fukū-Kensaku Kannon is, according to Pal, the one in the Hōkōdō (the oldest building in the Tōdaiji), which has been ascribed to the Tempio epoch of Nara Art (A.D. 645-712). The normal pair of hands of this three-eyed, eight-armed, standing and bejewelled image (draped in a *dhotī*, a tunic and a scarf) is *kongō-gasshō* or *kimyō-gasshō* (*namaskāra* or *añjali*) *mudrā* with a jewel between the joined palms. Of the attributes in other hands, *shakujō* (Sanskrit *khakkhara*), *segaṇ-in* (*vara-mudrā*), *kensaku* (*pāśa*) and lotus are mentioned.

Thus, in Japan *tridaṇḍaka* or *daṇḍa* is substituted by *shakujō*. The latter is a staff, attached to the circular final of which are metal rings makes a jingling sound, when shaken. The symbolism and use of this attribute have been fully explained by E. Dale Saunders.<sup>12</sup> The word *shakujō* has been translated as sistrum, sounding staff, monk's staff, alarm-staff, pewter stick, knowledge-stick and the like. The *tridaṇḍaka* (three staves tied together or a staff with three offshoots at the top) symbolizes triple control of thoughts, words and acts. This and also a plain staff (*daṇḍa*) are attributes of deities of ascetic nature and *parivrājakas*. Monks and mendicants carry these while on begging rounds or travelling. Thus, the purpose of both *shakujō* and *tridaṇḍaka* (or *daṇḍa*) is practically identical. According to Saunders<sup>13</sup> and also many others, the *shakujō* is of Central Asian origin. However, it is felt that the simpler form of *shakujō* is derived from Indian model. In support of this we may refer to a stucco relief (photo 5) decorating the platform of the fifth phase (ascribed to the sixth century A.D.) of Temple 3 (Main Temple) at Nalanda. Here the Buddha is seen standing with a begging bowl in his hanging right hand, by the side of which is a standing lady with palms resting on the shoulders of a standing boy in front. (The panel presumably represents Rāhula's asking, at the instance of his mother Yaśodharā, for patrimony and Buddha's offering his begging-bowl in response.) By the left side of the Buddha is the standing figure of an attending monk with staff crowned by a ring encircling which are two tiny rings (photo 6). Analogous staves, mostly in metal, are seen even now in the hands of many wandering *sādhus* in India.

Pratapaditya Pal also noticed several images of Amoghapāśa (Tibetan Don Zags) from Tibet where images of this Bodhisattva are not only profuse but have variant forms. Most of them are, however, eight-armed with sea-

tures and attributes conforming closely to the *sādhana* in the *Tanjur*. A few of the images alone are clad in tiger-skin, while the rest wear *dhotī*. One figure of Amoghapāśa described by Roerich is four-headed, four-armed and seated cross-legged; among the attributes the trident, the lotus and the lasso are mentioned. The tabulated description of Amoghapāśa by A. K. Gordon is as follows.<sup>14</sup> "One head, six or eight arms; standing; original hands in *namaskāra mudrā*; his other hands hold *kalaśa*, *triśūla*, *mālā*, *ghaṇṭā*, *pustaka*, and *pāśa*, which is the special symbol of this manifestation. Sometimes wears tiger skin; sometimes antelope on left shoulder; or original hands may be, right in *abhaya mudrā* and left holding *amṛta* vase. His other hands hold *pāśa*, *triśūla*, *pustaka*, *mālā* and *padma*". The Tibetan bronze illustrated by Gordon is single-headed, three-eyed, eight-armed, bejewelled, standing and wearing a *dhotī* and a scarf. The attributes in the right hands are the rosary, noose, *vara* and *abhaya* and in the left hands are the book, *triśūla*, lotus and water-pot. Gordon also refers to a seated single-faced and twenty-armed image;<sup>15</sup> the normal pair of hands is in *namaskāra-mudrā*; the remaining hands hold *pāśa*, *mālā*, *vajra*, *ghaṇṭā*, *padma*, *sūrya*, *cakra* and some Tantric symbols. Alice Getty, who has referred to six-armed or eight-armed images, has illustrated a Tibetan bronze image<sup>16</sup> with twentytwo arms with the principal pair of hands in *añjali-mudrā*. Among the attributes the noose, rosary, water-pot, lotus, wheel, thunderbolt, bell, cymbal, disc and ring (large) can be made out. Albert Grünwedel has illustrated two single-headed, eight-armed standing figures of Amoghapāśa.<sup>17</sup> One<sup>18</sup> of the two is a drawing after the tradition of the Kashmiri Pandits. Here Amoghapāśa, bereft of ornaments, wears a tiger-skin over a skirt-like under-garment, a scarf and *jaṭā-bhāra*. Of his right hands, one, against the chest, displays *abhaya*-(or *vyākhyāna*) *mudrā* and the second *tathāgata-vandana-mudrā*, the remaining two holding a *pāśa* and a rosary. Three of the left hands bear a book, a lotus and a water-pot, the fourth, in *jñāna-mudrā*, holding a *triśūla*.

The Nepalese representations of Amoghapāśa noticed by Pal are fairly late. All of them have eight hands with attributes conforming to the textual prescriptions with deviations in some cases. In the case of the bejewelled bronze image in the collection of Professor S. K. Saraswati, the palm displaying *abhaya-mudrā* holds a jewel. The *tathāgata-vandana-mudrā* is exhibited by the bejewelled figure of Amoghapāśa in the *paṭa* of the Rijksmuseum; here the lotus, which is seen from the sides, is not held in the apposite hand. In the *paṭa* of the Indian Museum (formerly with the Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture), the *vandanābhinayī* hand holds the rosary. The major deviation is noticed in the case of the labelled figure of Amoghapāśa in the elaborate *paṭa* dated N.S. 921 (A.D. 1801) in the collection

of the Victoria and Albert Museum (London), where a bow and an arrow are said to have substituted the *tridaṇḍaka* and lotus, the normal attributes of Amoghapāśa.

In view of the profusion of the images of Amoghapāśa in Java, Japan, Nepal and Tibet, it is a matter of great surprise, as already expressed by Pratapaditya Pal, that no image of this form of Avalokiteśvara has been traced in India which must have been the origin of the conception of this form. Pal has made a suggestion of the possibility of the identification of three of the Eastern Indian icons (now housed in the Indian Museum, Calcutta) and illustrated by R. D. Banerji in his *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture* (pls. VIII a, XI c and XXXIV a). Of these three images, the attributes in the six hands of the seated one (pl. XI c, Indian Museum old no. 4473 and new no. A 24143) are *vara*, *abhaya*, rosary, book, water-pot and lotus. In the absence of the *pāśa*, the basic attribute, the image cannot be identified with Amoghapāśa. The second six-armed image (pl. VIII a of E.I.S.M.S., Indian Museum no. 3860) stands in *sama-pada* and exhibits *vara-mudrā*, jewel, rosary, lotus, noose and water-pot.<sup>19</sup> Till a labelled image with these attributes alone is found, it may not be desirable to identify the image with Amoghapāśa, particularly when the *tridaṇḍaka* is absent. From the *Sādhanamālā* and the painted figures in the Macchandar Vahal in Kathmandu it is seen that many forms of Avalokiteśvara bear *pāśa*.

The third image (pl. XXXIV a of E.I.S.M.S., Indian Museum no. N.S. 2076), which also stands in *sama-pada*, is twelve-armed (photo 7). Pratapaditya Pal has recognized *abhaya-mudrā*, *vara-mudrā*, *akṣamālā* and *aṅkuśa* in four of the right hands and *pāśa*, *kamaṇḍalu*, *padma* and *tridaṇḍi* in four of the left hands. On a closer examination of the image it has been possible to identify the objects in the remaining four hands as well. These are a fruit and a jewel in the right hands and a book and a long staff with fluttering streamers (banner?) in the left hands. Eight of the twelve attributes thus are those prescribed for the eight-armed form of Amoghapāśa in the Nepalese and Tibetan texts. Pratapaditya Pal might be right in considering the image as a twelve-armed manifestation of Amoghapāśa-Lokeśvara. The inscribed Buddhist creed above the head of the Bodhisattva is in characters of the tenth century A.D.

## V

According to the *dhyāna* as contained in the *Amoghapāśa-Lokeśvara-pūjā*, quoted by Pal, Amoghapāśa-Avalokiteśvara, of white complexion, stands in *sama-pada* on the orb of the moon. Clad in a tiger-skin and a *saṃghāṭi* made up of an antelope-skin, the single-headed and eight-armed

Bodhisattva is in the garb of a *tapasvin*. Two of his right hands display *abhaya-mudrā* and *vara-mudrā*, while the remaining two bear a *pāśa* (noose) and an *akṣamālā* (rosary). In his left hands are a *pustaka* (book), a *tridaṇḍi* (staff with three branches), a *padma* (lotus) and a *kamaṇḍalu* (water-pot). Above his head is Amitābha, red (*rakta*) in complexion and in *dhyāna-mudrā*. On the right and left sides of Amoghapāśa are respectively Tārā of green complexion and Bhṛkuṭī of the colour of *kumkuma*. In front of him is Sudhana, of the colour of *kumkuma*, carrying a *pustaka* (book). On the back side is Hayagrīva, of red (*rakta*) complexion, holding a *daṇḍa* (staff) and a *padma* (lotus). Around Amoghapāśa are eight Bodhisattvas. In the direction of Agni (south-east) is Maitreya, of the colour of *kumkuma*, bearing a *cakra* (wheel) and a *nāga-puṣpa*. The remaining Bodhisattvas are Gaganagañja, Samantabhadra, Vajrapāṇi, Mañjughoṣa, Bhiskamvī (Viṣkambhin), Khagarbha and Kṣitigarbha. The attributes in their hands are not mentioned.

The *sādhana* in the *Tanjur* agrees closely with the Nepalese text in describing the single-faced Amoghapāśa in a standing posture, complexion, number of arms, attributes in hands and dress. The Bodhisattva bears Amitābha on his hair. He appears as bedecked in all kinds of ornaments and looking at all sentient beings with compassion. As in the Nepalese text, Amoghapāśa is surrounded by Tārā, Bhṛkuṭī, Sudhanakumāra and Hayagrīva. The iconographic features of Tārā and Bhṛkuṭī are specified here. Green in complexion, the bejewelled two-armed Tārā carries a lotus in her left hand and displays *vara-mudrā* with her right. Of reddish-yellow complexion is the bejewelled three-eyed Bhṛkuṭī with a *stūpa* in her bejewelled head-dress. Of her two right hands, one exhibits *abhaya-mudrā* and the other bears a rosary. The left hands carry a three-pronged stick and a pot. Sudhanakumāra is yellow in complexion and wears a crown. His hands are folded in *añjali-mudrā*. Of red complexion is the two-armed bearded dwarfish Hayagrīva with a corpulent body, three eyes, a frowning face and tawny hair rising upwards. Draped in a tiger-skin and with the green head of a horse in his hair, he carries a stick with his left hand, the right hand being raised. The *sādhana* does not refer to the eight Bodhisattvas, but it mentions Amoghapāśa as surrounded by all the *devas* around whom are four circles of lotuses.

## VI

All the attributes prescribed for the hands of Amoghapāśa in the Nepalese manuscript and the *sādhana* in the *Tanjur*, namely *abhaya-mudrā*, *vara-mudrā*, noose, rosary, book, staff, lotus and water-pot, are present in



eight of the twelve hands of the already-described image (Section I) of Nalanda. Of the remaining four hands of this image, one is empty, the attributes in the three remaining hands being *vandana-mudrā*, jewel and fruit. Of these three attributes, *vandana-mudrā* (or *tathāgata-vandana-mudrā*) is found in the painted figures of Amoghapāśa in the Nepalese *paṭas* housed in the Rijksmuseum (Leiden)<sup>20</sup> and the Indian Museum (Calcutta)<sup>21</sup> and in the Tibetan line-drawing after Kashmiri Pandits.<sup>22</sup> A jewel is also noticed in the joined palms of the icon of Fukū-Kensaku Kannon (Amoghapāśa) existing in the Hōkkedō, the oldest building in the Tōdaiji (Japan)<sup>23</sup> and in the palm displaying *abhaya-mudrā* in the metal image from Nepal.<sup>24</sup> Both the jewel and the fruit are found in several forms of Avalokiteśvara.

The image at Nalanda stands in *sama-pada* and bears Amitābha on his *jaṭā-mukuṭa* as per the Nepalese manuscript and the *sādhana* in the *Tanjur*. While both the texts prescribe animal-skins as the dress, the *sādhana* enjoins all kinds of ornaments. However, the image, as we have already stated, is attired in a *dhotī* and a scarf and is decked in ornaments. This kind of dress and also ornaments are found in most of the images noticed by Pratapaditya Pal.

From the above analysis of the available texts and the comparison of the images surveyed by Pal, it is almost certain that the Nalanda image represents Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.

Another twelve-armed image, which strongly recalls the above-mentioned image in the Nalanda Museum, stands on the northern bank (near the north-western corner) of the Suraj Talao at Badgaon, adjoining the remains at Nalanda. Made of blackish stone, the image is stylistically ascribable to the tenth century A.D. The head of the image along with the upper part of the back-slab is missing.

Attired in a decorated *dhotī* held by an ornamental belt and a pleated scarf worn in an *upavīṭi* fashion, the Bodhisattva wears anklets, beaded bracelets, armlets, a beaded *upavīṭa*, a beaded *hāra* (*ekāvali*) and a beaded necklace. Some locks of hairs are seen on the shoulders. He stands in *sama-pada* on a *viśva-padma*.

Of his hands, the six left ones hold (from top downward) (i) the stalk of a full-blown lotus, (ii) a book, (iii) a *tridaṇḍaka*, (iv) a noose, (v) a conch-shell and (vi) a water-pot. The lowest right hand (damaged), to judge by the breakage, was in *vara-mudrā*, the next holds a jewel (partly preserved), the third bears a *mātuluṅga*-like fruit, the fourth (palm broken) most probably displayed *abhaya-mudrā*, the fifth (palm broken) possibly held a rosary and the raised topmost hand (mostly missing) was presumably *vandanā-bhinayī*. In the case of the image in the Nalanda Museum, the fruit is in the fifth (from the top) left hand, the fourth (from the top) right hand being

empty. In this image the fruit is in the fourth (from the top) right hand, the conch-shell being in the fifth left hand. Thus here with the provision of a conch-shell, none of the hands is empty.

On the dexter of the Bodhisattva is the bejewelled two-armed Tārā seated in *mahārāja-līlā* on a *viśva-padma*. With the stalk of an *utpala* in her left hand, she displays *abhaya-mudrā* with her right palm.

On the left side of Tārā Sūcimukha kneels with raised beseeching hands and a swollen belly.

Near the left leg of Avalokiteśvara is the standing pot-bellied Hayagrīva of fierce mien with arms crossed against the chest and coiled locks. On the left side of Hayagrīva is the four-armed Bhṛkuṭī seated in a half kneeling posture on a *viśva-padma*. With a stout body, the sparsely-bejewelled goddess wears a *jaṭā-mukutā* bearing a *stūpa*. Her right hand, which is *vandanā-bhinayī*, holds a rosary, the lower right being *varada*. In the upper and lower left hands are a damaged staff (*tridaṇḍaka*) and a water-pot respectively.

L. A. Waddell has furnished the description of a twelve-armed form of Avalokiteśvara<sup>25</sup> from the Tibetan translation, by Zhalu and Tāranātha from Sanskrit.<sup>26</sup> The new nomenclature given by him is Amogha Vavriṭha Avalokita or Amogha Avalokita of the Sacrificial Gem (Tibetan: *spyau-ras-gzigs-don-yod-mchhod-pai-nor-bu*). Waddell's description is as follows.

"He is white, with one face and twelve hands.

'Symb.—Of the right hands one is in *mchhog-sbyin* attitude on a lotus and holds a pearl rosary, others are in preaching attitude, *sdigs-hdsub*, 'pointing-finger attitude', others hold an arrow, an eight-leaved lotus; and the lefts hold a book, vessel for jewels stemmed lotus, anointing vase, bow, and *Ichugma* (red) adorned with a vajra. He is bedecked with silks and jewels, and stands. On his right is Vasundhari devī, and on his left Naga rājās Nanda and Upananda, and under the *vara* hand sits the preta rāṇi with mouth agape."

In illustration of this form, Waddell has also published the photograph of a twelve-armed image with the caption 'Amoghababṛitha-Avalokita' with 'Vasudhara Devi' and 'Naga king Nanda and Upanada'.<sup>27</sup> The image (no. 3795) is now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

The form as described by Waddell is not applicable to the image (photo 8) published by him. The attending figure identified by him as Vasudhārā or Vasundharī represents in fact the bejewelled Tārā seated in *mahārāja-līlā* on a lotus; displaying *abhaya-mudrā* with her right hand, the goddess carries the stalk of an *utpala* with her left hand. Again, the two figures on the left side of the Bodhisattva, identified by him as Naga kings Nanda and Upananda, stand for Hayagrīva and Bhṛkuṭī. The latter, like Tārā, is bejewelled and seated in *mahārāja-līlā* on a lotus,

but has a high *jaṭā-mukuta* bearing a *stūpa*. Two hands of this four-armed three-eyed goddess are in *añjali-mudrā*. While the raised right hand, with a rosary, is *vandanābhīnayī*, the remaining left hand holds a water-pot. Between her and the left leg of the Bodhisattva is the fierce-looking Haya-grīva with his left leg bent; his left palm rests on the thigh, the raised right being *vandanābhīnayī*. The kneeling emaciated figure with a swollen belly, uplifted hands and a somewhat pointed proboscis, immediately by the right leg of the Bodhisattva, represents Sūcimukha looking up with a desire to drink nectar that would flow from the *varada* hand of the Bodhisattva.

Draped in a decorated *dhotī* held by an ornate belt and a scarf worn in an *upavīti* fashion, the bejewelled Bodhisattva stands in *sama-pada* on a double-petalled lotus. The *jaṭā-mukuta* is badly damaged; the legs and palms alone of Amitābha have survived.

The objects in the left hands of the Bodhisattva are quite distinct. They are (i) a bowl full of jewels, (ii) a book, (iii) a *tridaṇḍaka*, (iv) a noose, (v) the stalk of a full-blown lotus and (vi) a water-pot with a long neck. While one of the six right hands bears a rosary, to display *abhaya-mudrā* and *vara-mudrā*. The objects, if at all any, in the three other hands, showing uncommon *mudrās*, are not distinct. All the eight attributes of the popular eight-armed form of Amoghapāśa are present in this image. The ninth attribute is a bowl of jewels in place of a single jewel found in some of the images of Amoghapāśa from Japan and Nepal.

On either side of the head of the Bodhisattva is a seated Dhyāni-Buddha—Amoghasiddhi on the dexter and Akṣobhya on the sinister.

The Buddhist creed inscribed on the image is in characters of the ninth-tenth century A.D.<sup>28</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> BENOYTOSE BHATTACHARYA, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, 2nd edition (Calcutta, 1958), p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 394, no. 5 and fig. 5 (A) on p. 402.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 395 and 396, no. 15 and fig. 15 (A) on p. 404.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 398, no. 35 and fig. 35 (A) on p. 409.

<sup>5</sup> PRATAPADITYA PAL, 'The Iconography of Amoghapāśa Lokēśvara—I', *Oriental Art*, New Series, vol. XII, no. 4 (1966), pp. 234 and 235.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* Also *Oriental Art*, New Series, vol. XIII, no. 1 (1967), p. 26; the name here is given as *Se-nab nin-chen*.

<sup>8</sup> New Series, vol. XII, no. 4 (1966), pp. 234-39; vol. XIII, No. 1 (1967), pp. 21-28.

<sup>9</sup> PRATAPADITYA PAL AND HSIEN-CH'I TSENG, *Lamaist Art: The Aesthetics of Harmony* (published by Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), p. 39, fig. 16. Pal notes that 'Amoghapāśa was a greatly revered Bodhisattva in all Lamaist areas, and his worship goes back to the T'ang period. He is a protective divinity in Nepal, and both there and in Tibet he is regarded as a benign deity to whom one looks for help in great distress, as for release from prison'. In the *tanka*, the Bodhisattva, stated to be golden-coloured, is surrounded by twenty-three figures. Standing in *sama-pada*, the eight-armed Bodhisattva exhibits *abhaya*, *vara*, *tridaṇḍī* and rosary with his right hands and book, *pāśa*, lotus and water-pot with the left hands.

# TWELVE-ARMED AVALOKITESVARA

- <sup>10</sup> *Two Lamaistic Pantheons*, Vol. II (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1937), p. 267, no. 171.
- <sup>11</sup> S. F. OLDENBURG, *SBORNIK IZOBRAZHENII 300 BURKHANOV PO ALBOMU AZIATSKAGO MUZEYA*, Bibliotheca Buddhica, V (St. Petersburg, 1903), p. 32, no. 96.
- <sup>12</sup> *Mudrā—A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture* (London, 1960), pp. 179–181, 256 and 257.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179; Dratapaditya Pal, *op. cit.*, vol. XIII, p. 26.
- <sup>14</sup> *The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism* (Vernmont and Tokyo, 1959), p. 65.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- <sup>16</sup> *The Gods of Northern Buddhism* (Oxford, 1914), pl. XXIII fig. C.
- <sup>17</sup> *Mythologie des Buddhismus in Tibet und der Mongolei* (Leipzig, 1900), figs. 105 and 106.
- <sup>18</sup> Fig. 105. The same is illustrated on p. 37 of Part 8 of *A New Tibet-Mongol Pantheon* (New Delhi, 1963) by Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra.
- <sup>19</sup> An image with identical attributes is housed in the National Museum (No. 59. 92/1).
- <sup>20</sup> *Oriental Art*, XIII, fig. 5.
- <sup>21</sup> *Indian Museum Bulletin*, IV, no. 2, 1969, fig. 4.
- <sup>22</sup> A. GRÜNWALD, *Mythologie des Buddhismus in Tibet und der Mongolei* (Leipzig, 1900), p. 129, fig. 105.
- <sup>23</sup> *Oriental Art*, XII, p. 238.
- <sup>24</sup> *Oriental Art*, XIII, fig. 4.
- <sup>25</sup> "The Indian Buddhist Cult of Avalokita and his Consort 'Tārā' "the Saviouress", illustrated from the Remains in Magadha", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1891, p. 79.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- <sup>27</sup> Pl. II, 3.
- <sup>28</sup> The photographs published herewith are the copyright of the Archaeological Survey of India.



# Eight Nāyikās in Nepali Painting

PRATAPADITYA PAL

THE Los Angeles County Museum of Art has recently acquired a set of eight Nāyikā paintings that are of considerable significance for the history of Nepali painting. That the Mughal-Rajput traditions of India exerted some influence upon the Nepali painting tradition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been recognised for some time. The extent and nature of that influence, however, are yet to be fully determined. It may generally be said that the influence of the Mughal tradition remained confined mostly to matters of princely costumes and portraiture. This is evident from a seventeenth-century religious painting where portraits of King Jitāmitramalla and his sons are included at the bottom (Fig. 1). Evidently, the dress is an adaptation from Mughal styles, although the portraits themselves are more idealized than the more naturalistic Mughal portraits. The Rajput tradition, on the other hand, proved to be more influential, as is known from many works of the period. For the most part, these paintings portray themes related to Kṛṣṇa legends and, hence, their function was didactic. The Nāyikā paintings, however, served as prefatory material to a much larger *Rāgamālā* set, and their purpose was more aesthetic than didactic; hence, the discovery of these paintings ushers in a new phase in the history of Nepali aesthetic.

Along with the *Rāgamālā* and an album of erotic illustrations,<sup>1</sup> the Nāyikā paintings may be regarded as the only examples of purely secular themes found so far in Nepali painting. Judging by the remains of mural paintings in the palaces of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, it is obvious that

<sup>1</sup> The complete *Rāgamālā* set, of which the eight *nāyikā* folios formed a part, is now in the collection of the Norton Simon Foundation in Los Angeles. For erotic paintings in a similar style, see P. Rawson, *The Art of Tantra*, (Greenwich, Connecticut, 1973), pl. 81.

the subjects favoured by the princes for decorating their public halls were legends from the Hindu *purāṇas*. They may also have adorned the walls of their private chambers with themes drawn from erotic literature, as the Indian princes did, but these no longer exist. There seems no doubt, however, that erotic subjects were certainly painted as miniatures and put together in suitable albums both for sexual delectation and edification.

At the top of each Nāyikā painting occurs a brief poetic description of the heroine portrayed below. Curiously, the verses are ascribed to Bharata-muni, but they are quite different from those found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It may also be of interest to note that the Nepali poet uses the term *vāsasajjā* for *vāsakasajjā*. Whether the letter *ka* was dropped wilfully by the poet or inadvertently by the scribe is difficult to determine. In his *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharata uses the word *virahoṭkanṭhitā* for one of the heroines, but most later rhetoricians, as also the author of the present verses, preferred the term *utkanṭhitā*.<sup>2</sup> This, of course, was transformed to *uṭkā* in later Hindi poetry. It may also be pointed out that our author uses the term *bhartṛkā* rather than *patikā*, which is more commonly used by Sanskrit poets. Unusual also is the use of the expression *proṣilapriyatamā*.

Whether the verses were composed by Bharata or not, they should be of some interest to scholars of Sanskrit poetry. For our purpose, it will be important to remember that the verses describing the eight nāyikās are really concerned with situations related to love or emotional states of a woman, rather than to types of personalities. This was correctly realized by some of the later Sanskrit poets and rhetoricians who considered these verses as delineating specific situations: but in the indigenous poetry, especially Hindi, they were taken for descriptive of archetypal heroines.

In the representation of *Proṣilapriyatamā* (Fig. 2), we see a forlorn heroine seated pensively on a couch dreaming of her absent lover, who is abroad. That it is a night scene is indicated by a lamp at the lower right-hand corner.

The mood changes in Fig. 3, where the heroine is shown as stretched out on a bed. Described as *utkanṭhitā*, her body is supposed to be burning with the fever of desire or love (. . . *manmathamahājvaravepitāṅgī*).

Fig. 4 illustrates a representation of *vāsakasajjā*. Here, the heroine has eagerly prepared the bed, strewn it with flowers and is ready with a bowl of *pān*. Moreover, she sits expectantly at a door or a window and watches the road so as not to miss the approach of her lover. As a realistic touch, the artist has added a rack overhead, which holds towels and other garments for the lover's use.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Nāyaka-Nāyikā literature, see Rakesh Gupta, *Studies in Nāyaka-Nāyikā-bheda*. (Allgarh, 1967).

PLATE I

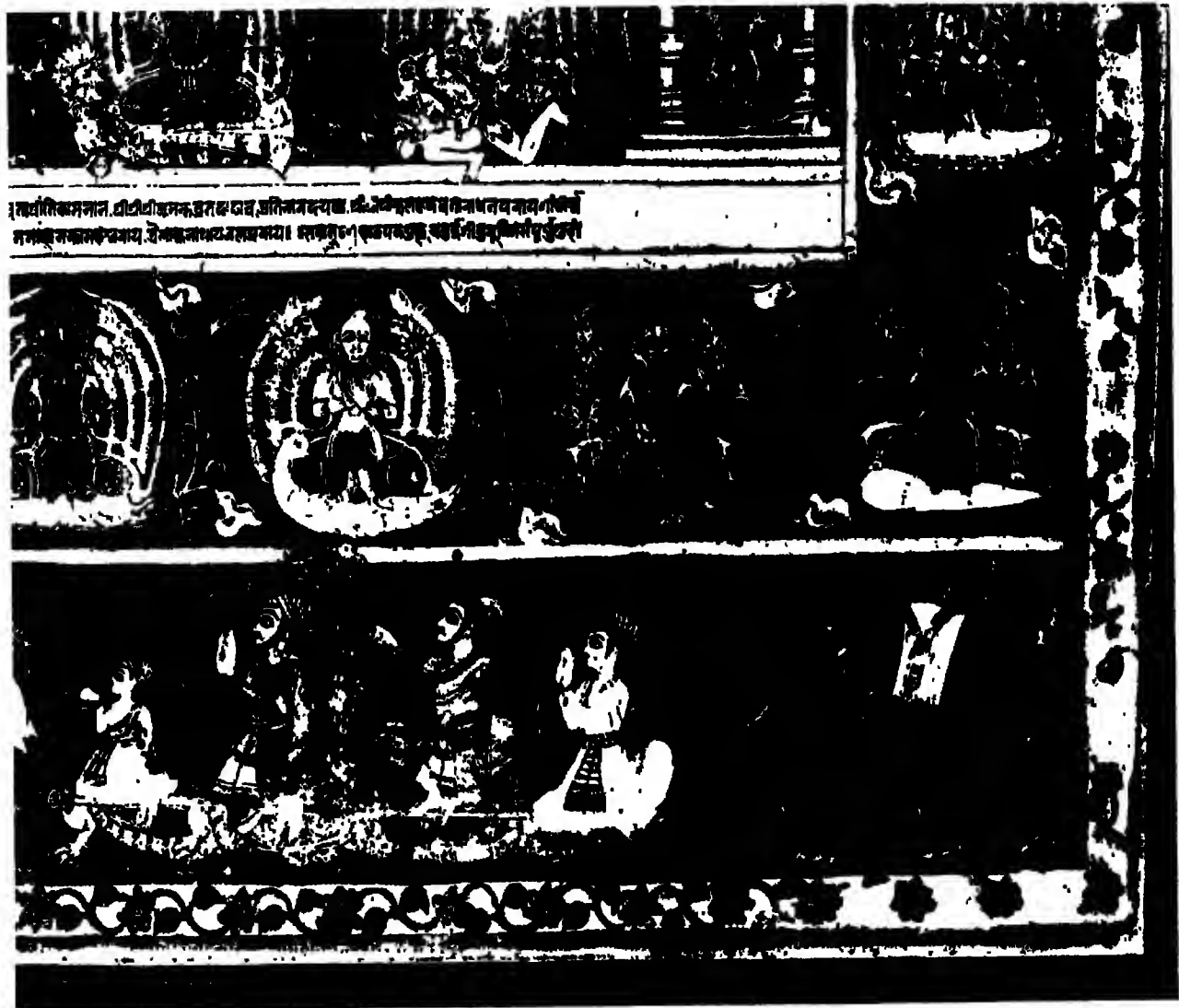


FIG. 1



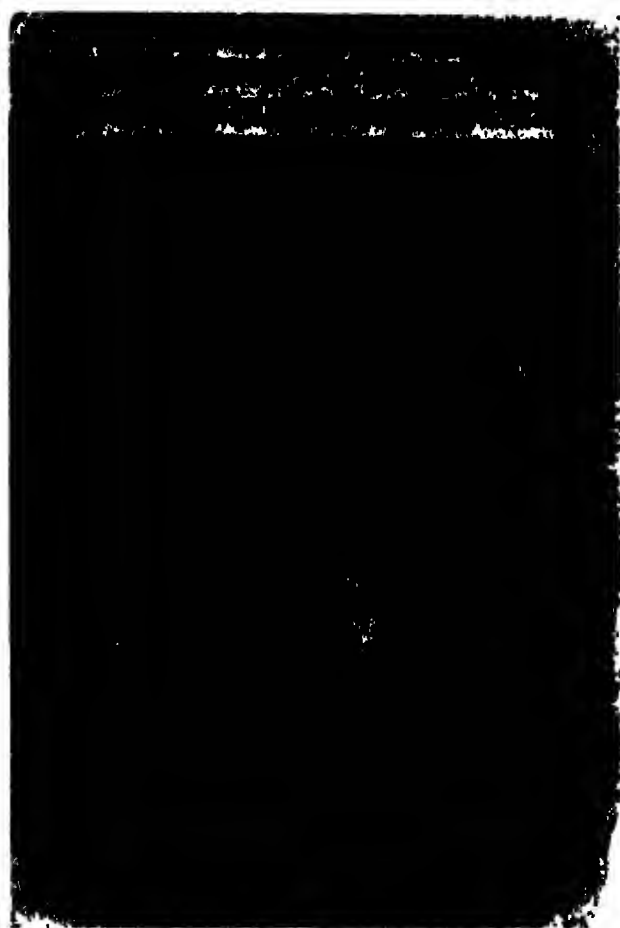


FIG. 2



FIG. 3

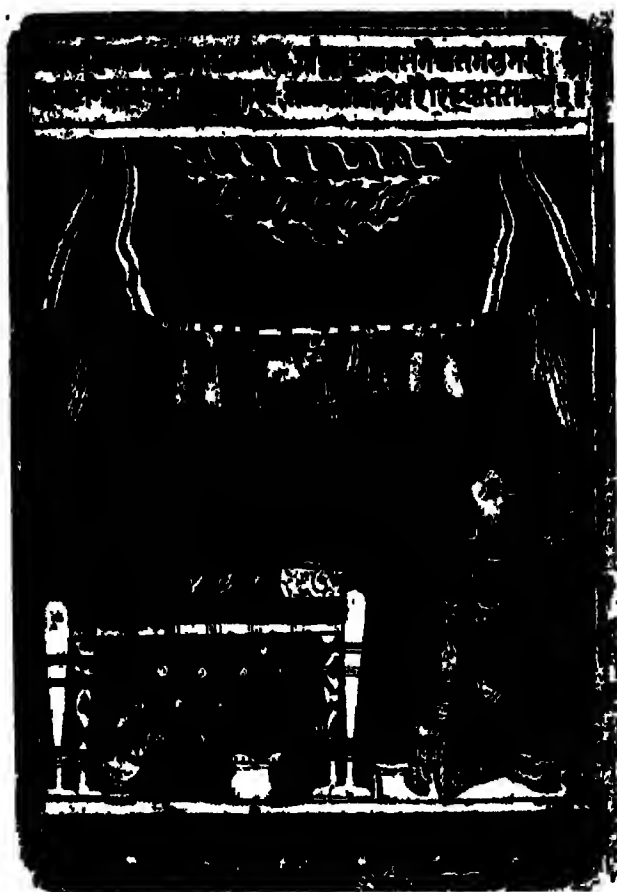


FIG. 4



FIG. 5



FIG. 6



FIG. 7

PLATE V



FIG. 8



FIG. 9

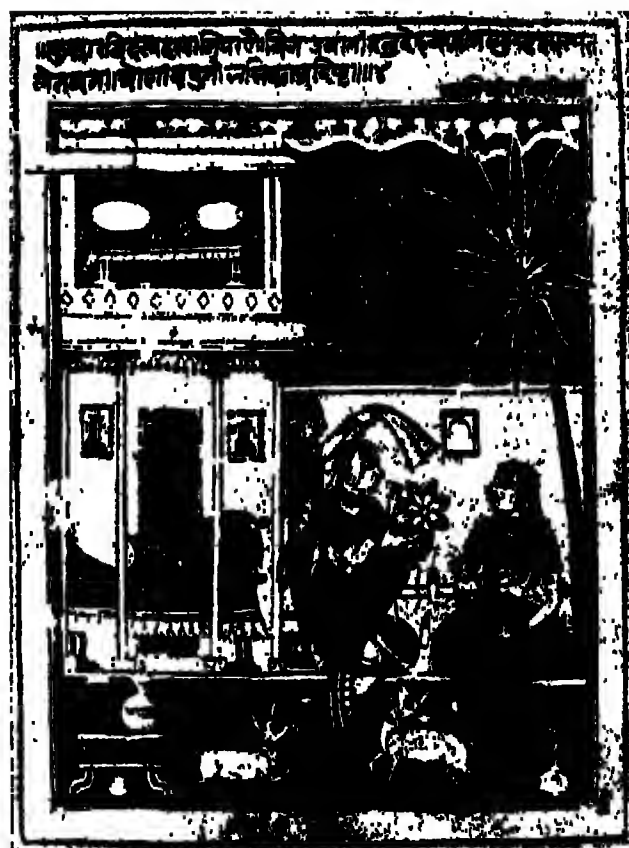


FIG. 10



FIG. 11

*Vipralabdā* is a jilted heroine (Fig. 5) who has been deceived by her lover. The heroine here is obviously disappointed, and a confidante is introduced who attempts to console the distressed heroine.

According to Bharata, one of the natural qualities of a woman is courage. And so, in the next painting (Fig. 6), the daring heroine herself sets out to meet her lover rather than wait and be jilted. The cloud in the sky symbolizes the storm-laden night, which makes her task all the more exciting. She is, of course, the *abhisārikā*.

In the next three paintings, at last we meet the hero. In one of these (Fig. 7), he has arrived late, and the slighted (*kṛnāḍitā*) heroine is feigning anger as she reclines on the bed and keeps him waiting. In another (Fig. 8), the lovers had separated due to a quarrel (*kalahāntarītā*), but repentant, he has returned and begs her forgiveness. She, of course, is coy and pretends impregnable anger. Finally, in the eighth painting (Fig. 9), the situation warms up at last. Seated on a cot, the bold lover diverts the heroine's attention by attempting to make her take a *pān* as his left hand stretches out for her breast. The lady, however, is still bashful, and her effort to dissuade him appears, at best, half-hearted.

It is obvious, therefore, that five of the situations refer directly, and two others (Figs. 7, 8) rather indirectly, to love in separation. This is hardly surprising, since Sanskrit poets have always regarded the sentiments involved with love in separation much more appropriate for poetic expression than love in union. And it is this unrequited love with all its emotional implications that was sublimated by Jayadeva (twelfth century) and later Vaiṣṇava poets to the spiritual plane; and, thereafter, the imagery was ubiquitously employed to describe the mystical relationship between Rādhā (the archetypal heroine) and Kṛṣṇa (the universal lover).

There can be no question that the Nepali *nāyikā* paintings were modelled after Rājput prototypes. It must be remembered, however, that commonly the Rājput painters of India visualized the poetry of Keśavadāsa or other sixteenth or seventeenth-century Hindi poets. The Nepali verses, as I have already indicated, are ascribed to the legendary author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. A possible source for the Nepali miniatures is the Mewar school of painting as is revealed by a cursory comparison with a *Rāgamālā* painting executed in Chawand in 1605 (Fig. 10). Although the Chawand painting is more elaborate, there is a general similarity in the format and the composition. The use of architecture, to the left of the picture, is similar in the Chawand painting and in the representation of the *abhisārikā nāyikā* (Fig. 5), although the architectural styles are quite different. Noteworthy, too, is the similar use of the four-poster within the building in the Chawand painting and the Nepali examples. But the most striking stylistic

correspondence may be noted in the treatment of the women's facial features. Although the nose of the Nepali women is not quite as sharp and prominent, the chin in each instance has a distinct loop that is a conspicuous characteristic of the faces in the Chawand painting. And, finally, it may be mentioned that the verse at the top of the Chawand painting is employed almost verbatim in one of the Nepali *Rāgamālā* paintings, although for a different *rāgiṇī* than the original one.

Perhaps, the most curious feature of the Nepali set is that in each instance the artist has painted a multi-coloured lotus in the foreground. This is, of course, a typical iconographic element seen particularly in Nepali religious paintings where the deities are placed upon a lotus (Fig. 11). Obviously, despite the intrusion of a new tradition, the Nepali painter was not for giving up his familiar formula. Another peculiar feature is the presence of a curtain along the upper portion of the picture and the total absence of a horizon, even when the scene takes place out of doors (Fig. 6). The curtain, too, was a well-established cliché of Nepali painting (Fig. 11) and seems to have been derived from eleventh-century painted manuscript covers. Details, such as furnishings, architecture, clouds, etc. are obviously Nepali, as are the pigments. Despite Indian influence, the Nepali artist seems to have continued to use his own palette, where the red predominates. The shade of the red, almost approximating crimson, is, however, unusual. Equally curious, also, is the use of mica or silver flakes to give a glittering appearance to the surface. Finally, the paintings seem to have been given a lacquer finish, which is somewhat unusual for Nepali paintings.

The attire of the males resembles both Rajput and Mughal paintings of the seventeenth century, although it must be remembered that the same mode of dress was also used in Nepal. The women's dress, too, reveals influences from the world of contemporary Indian fashion, but, generally, the figures seem to reflect more conservative taste in the styles of the coiffure and ornaments. It must also be admitted that their postures and gestures are hardly as graceful as one sees in Rajput paintings. Here again, such awkward movements are characteristic of earlier Nepali narrative paintings, particularly Buddhist. Indeed, there seems every reason to believe that the artist was primarily a painter of religious works, and, when called on to paint such secular themes, could not entirely change his style.

Although the artist must have used Indian models, both for composition and iconography, it is significant that the hero here is not identified with Kṛṣṇa. Usually, in most such *nāyaka-nāyikā*, *Bāramāsā* or *Rāgamālā* paintings—particularly in those done after 1650 in India—the hero more often than not is portrayed as the dark-skinned Kṛṣṇa. The Nepali artist, however, has simply used a prince as his model for the hero. At the same time,

#### EIGHT NAYIKAS IN NEPALI PAINTING

it must be pointed out that the text above does not require the identification of the hero with Kṛṣṇa. At any rate, it is not improbable, therefore, that the artist was using a late sixteenth or early seventeenth-century Indian model, such as the Chawand set.

Despite the completeness of the Nepali set, the colophon page, if ever there had been one, is lost. However, there seems every reason to believe that the set was painted somewhere around the mid-seventeenth century. A cursory examination of the palaeography reveals great similarities with the style of writing that prevailed during the first half of the century. It has also been previously mentioned that the complete set consists of thirty-six other paintings portraying a *Rāgamālā*. At least two kings in seventeenth-century Nepal were particularly fond of music. One was Pratāpamalla of Kathmandu and the other, Jagatprakāśamalla of Bhatgaon. It is possible, indeed extremely likely, that the present set was painted for one of these kings. I have already indicated that the verses describing the heroines are attributed to Bharata, who is given the title of *kavīndra*. Curiously, both Pratāpamalla and Jagatprakāśamalla were poets and both assumed the title, *kavīndra*. If, indeed, the verses were composed by a court-poet of either monarch, the use of the expression could well have been intended as a literary pun, of which Sanskrit poets are inordinately fond. Or, could one of the kings have himself been responsible for the verses? Considering Jagatprakāśamalla's love for music, it seems more probable that the set was painted for him by an artist of Bhatgaon or Bhaktapur.

Finally, it may be mentioned that the Rajput style in seventeenth-century Nepal, as expressed in this group of paintings or in other works, stems generally from Rajasthan schools, rather than Pahari. Until the discovery of the present set, the earliest Nepali paintings displaying Rajput influence could be dated only to the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Of course, this is also the period which saw the birth of the Pahari tradition at Basholi, at least so far as extant examples permit us to draw such a conclusion. One can, therefore, hardly expect to find Pahari influence on Nepali paintings prior to A.D. 1675. Curiously, however, the *nāyaka-nāyikā* themes do not appear to have been as popular with seventeenth-century Rajasthan artists as they were with Pahari artists in general. Certainly, in no *Rāgamālā* set, either from Rajasthan or the hills, are the eight *nāyikās* included in the manner in which they are appended to the Nepali set.





# Some Problems of the Social Structure of Ancient India

G. M. BONGARD-LEVIN

## A. 'THE COMMUNITY IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM B.C.

THE character and role of the community in ancient India is a complex and poorly investigated problem, which is due both to the scarcity of data and to insufficient attention given it by the Indologists.<sup>1</sup> Many of its aspects have so far remained obscure: the status of the community in the specific historical periods, its internal administration, the structure of the families of which it consisted, and even the terminology. The fact is, however, that the ancient Indian community was one of the main components of the socio-economic structure.<sup>2</sup> As I. M. Dyakonov has justly noted, "for the study of the socio-economic system in the ancient world the position of the free producer of material wealth is no less important than that of the slaves. It can even be said that in some respects the problem of free members of ancient society is even more important."<sup>3</sup> In the latter half of the first millennium B.C. communities embraced a considerable proportion of Indian population, primarily free husbandmen. Under the impact of socio-economic and political processes taking place in that period, the character and the composition of and the relations between the community and the state were undergoing changes. The rates of formation of the communities and the shapes they took in the different areas of the country were different.<sup>4</sup> On the vast territory of the Mauryan empire there existed both primitive clans and village communities,<sup>5</sup> which were emerging from clans or were being formed from settlers who moved to vacant lands<sup>6</sup> and in which property and social inequality could be already observed. In the Ganges valley, village communities were the most widespread.

In this article, "community" means "village community".—Ed.

Judging by the available data, a village community comprised a number of large patriarchal families, which were gradually disintegrating into individual ones. Buddhist texts contain evidence that a *grāma* contained plots of land allotted to such families.<sup>7</sup> Villages varied in size. In the texts (J., I.199), a Magadha village of thirty families<sup>8</sup> and *grāmas* of 500 or even 1,000 families are mentioned.

Each village was separated from the neighbouring ones by natural or artificial boundaries. Woods came so near to the tracts of arable lands that trees had to be cut down to gain land for the crops. Land was of a great value; it is natural that disputes over boundaries between villages, as witnessed by the sources, invariably attracted the attention of community members.<sup>9</sup>

It is possible to reconstruct the general appearance of a *grāma*. In the centre various public buildings were usually placed—the assembly hall and the buildings for the community administration. The rest of the area was occupied by houses and structures owned by the individual families (*kuṭī* in Pāṇini and in the Buddhist writings).<sup>10</sup> A *grāma* was surrounded by woods, pastures (*gocara*, III.3.119), meadows, and cultivated (*sīlya*, IV.4.91) and uncultivated (*aranya*) fields. Cultivated fields were apparently surrounded by a clay wall<sup>11</sup> and guarded by watchmen.<sup>12</sup>

Arable areas included plots (*kṣetra*) of individual families and the common land. The latter included also pastures, where the cattle grazed (*grāmya-paśu-saṅgha*, Pāṇini I.2.73),<sup>13</sup> and, probably, orchards.<sup>14</sup> The “Manu Laws” (VIII.237) state that a village must be surrounded by communal land (*parihāra*) of 100 *dhanus*.

According to the Jātakas (I.193), the communal property included irrigation works and roads, the care of which was common responsibility. (The control of irrigation works in the private households was the owner's responsibility.) Kauṭilya reports (*Arth.* II.35) that the chief tax-collector had the duty of taking stock not only of the villagers' cultivated plots but also of unarable lands, pastures, and roads. Along with taxes raised from free villagers, a tax from whole villages<sup>15</sup> was levied. This also points to the existence of communal lands. According to the *Arthaśāstra* (III.10) “the village itself shall receive the penalty of a farmer who, after accepting (residence in) a village, does not do (his share) of work” (Kangle's translation). Obviously, such farmers (*karṣaka*, in the commentary this word was explained as *karmakāra*) were invited to till communal field, otherwise they would have been regarded as a private owner.

In the period under consideration, property and social differentiation had penetrated deep into the village, which affected its *varṇa* and class-structure and the nature of labour force. Free members of the community

belonged mainly to the Vaiśya *varṇa*, although residents of the *grāmas* set up by the king in thinly populated areas were for the most part Śūdra agriculturists (*Arth.* II.1.).<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that in the Mauryan epoch a process began of drawing together of the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras, whose condition was somewhat improving.

The full members of the communities tilled their plots mostly with their own hands helped only by the members of their family.<sup>17</sup> Those who were better off used the labour of *karmakāras*, invited at the height of the farming season, and, evidently, slaves. According to the *Milindapañha*, hired labourers (*bhattakas*, *kammakāras*) and slaves, men and women, lived in every village. They were likely to have been in the service not only of individual families but also of the community as a whole. The latter employed *karmakāras* to cultivate the communal field and paid them in money or with food. There were special officials hired by the community to supervise the communal water reservoirs. Pāṇini (VI.3.60) knew of cleaners of village-wells.<sup>18</sup>

The owners saw to it that the boundaries between their fields should not be violated, as witnessed by sources, which report boundary disputes;<sup>19</sup> however the rights of an owner were controlled by the community, which evidently laid certain claims when necessary. The role of the community in settling various problems, including that of land, was considerable. Judging by the Śāstras, it retained its importance also till a later period. The community strove to preserve its land and to restrain the sale of individual plots, especially in cases when the prospective purchaser was a "stranger", that is, not its member. When such transactions were contracted, priority was given to the relatives, next to the neighbours, creditors and finally to all others.

The community also opposed the partition of land plots, although of course it was unable to stem this natural process.<sup>20</sup> Kauṭilya declared that immovable property (evidently, first and foremost, land) should not be liable to division after the death of the head of the family and that the heirs were to use it without partitioning (*Arth.* III.5).

Along with the agriculturists in a village there lived craftsmen, who catered to the needs of the individual households and of the whole community. Pāṇini mentions a special class of village craftsmen, *grāmaśilpīn* (VI.2.62), and also carpenters, *grāmataḥṣā* (V.4.95).<sup>21</sup> The latter carried out orders, moving from one household to another. A carpenter of a higher rank possessed a workshop of his own. Patañjali (I.1.1.48) mentions five categories of village craftsmen, whom one of his commentators enumerates a potter (*kulāla*), a smith (*karmāra*), a carpenter (*vardhakin*), a barber (*nāpita*), and a laundress (*rajaka*). Unfortunately, their status is unknown

to us. An opinion has been expressed that they were given corn as payment for their work and were dependants of the village.<sup>22</sup> According to Pāṇini, some of the craftsmen were independent and fairly well-off. A combining agriculture and handicrafts was a specific feature of the village community in ancient India.

In spite of the strong property and social differentiation within the village community, in the period under consideration, it had retained many features of a united collective, common traditions and institutions.<sup>23</sup> To a great extent this was promoted by the collective work of villages, including women: clearing roads, cutting down trees, building wells and assembly halls.<sup>24</sup> The community members were also united through the common expenses on grazing and protecting cattle, repair and maintenance of the irrigation works, etc. (*Arth.* III.10).

Religious unity was a further cementing element, for each village had a deity of its own. As a rule, its entire population attended religious ceremonies, festivities, community gathering (*prekṣā*) and entertainments which were considered to be very important indeed. According to the *Arthaśāstra* (III.10), the members of a village should obey the orders of one who proposed what was beneficial to all. A failure to comply with was punished by a fine. Apparently, the village administrators saw to it that the residents should not shun these undertakings and bring in their share. It is possible that economic considerations in the first place determined the extreme attention given to such measures, which were a means of raising a communal fund. Only Brāhmaṇas were not obliged to attend festivities, but they, too, were not exempt from a contribution (*Arth.* III.10). Members of the community tried to protect the stability of the traditions which consolidated it, for the community was their champion and, as it were, it opposed the state striving to bring it under a more rigid control and curtail its rights.

On many occasions the village acted as a single unit in its relations with individuals, other villages and the state. In the "Manu Laws" (VIII.219-221), an agreement concluded between a village and a private person is cited and Bṛihaspati mentions agreements concluded between villages.<sup>25</sup> In fixing the taxes the central authority regarded the *grāma* as a separate fiscal unit. Community members were obliged to work for the king for a certain time every year. According to the Dharmasūtras, he exploited (in the form *viṣṭi*) the labour of craftsmen and agriculturists.<sup>26</sup> The commentator Bhaṭṭasvāmin notes that *grāma* residents took part in the building of state fortresses (*durga*),<sup>27</sup> although a free man could send *karmakāras* or slaves in his place. Villages of a special category were obliged to provide soldiers—*āyudhīya* (they are listed in the *Arthaśāstra*—II.35—alongside villages which paid taxes).

Judging from the data available, in the latter half of the first millennium B.C. the *grāma* had still retained its self-government. Free villagers attended and assembled in meetings,<sup>28</sup> at which issues internal of the village life were discussed (for instance, irrigation, protection from robbers, exercise of religious rites) and at which some judiciary matters were evidently decided upon. An assembly was entitled to exile an objectionable person—the Jātakas (I.239), for instance, tell of the expulsion of an astrologer, "an expert in lucky and unlucky times" (I.296), who was usually supported by all the residents,—to admit new members to the community, to punish a "novice" who had failed to fulfil the provisions of a contract or to do some work,<sup>29</sup> and to impose a fine for violating an established regulation and other kinds of misdemeanour. For instance, a private owner who took water from the communal reservoir was liable to the highest fine (Manu, IX.281); for destroying an irrigation dam he was punished by death (IX.279).

In discussing such issues as the sale of land and boundary disputes the elders' (*grāmaṇḍika*) opinion was considered very important, for they played a significant role in the community life (*Arth.* III.9). According to Kauṭilya, they were to take care of the property of minors until these would come of age and also of the property of temples. Traditionally, the words of so highly respected persons had, as it were, the effect of the law: they served as a guarantee of inviolability of an agreement (*Arth.* VII.17). "Even in the matter of counsel, the legitimate over-reaches the wise through association with elders" (Kangle's translation). Sometimes elders acted as proxies. "In the absence of the creditor, the (debtor) may recover his pledge after depositing the redemption amount with village elders" (III.12 Kangle's translation). There are reasons to suppose that in the Mauryan epoch they formed a kind of council which passed many important decisions (we know of this from the evidence of the Gupta period). In course of time the composition of the village assembly changed: instead of all full members of the community only heads of families or households came to be invited to it, according to the evidence of the *Milindapañha*, *kuṭapuriṣṣa*. The weakening of the democratic traditions also found expression in the strengthening of the role of the village headman. The post-Vedic texts that can, with some reservations, be used to judge about the epoch under consideration, make it possible to outline his role and basic functions, and to trace the process of the transformation of the village headman into a hereditary representative of the state power.<sup>30</sup>

In the sources, the headman is denoted by a variety of terms: *grāma-bhojaka*, *grāmika*, *grāmādhipa*. In the latter half of the post millennium B.C., his office was no longer elective,<sup>31</sup> although in the preceding period he was elected by free community members.<sup>32</sup> However, it is hardly possible that the

situation was the same in all parts of the country. In some regions the older traditions might still have survived.

Gradually, the chief function of the headman became collection of taxes for the state. "What must be given to the king by the village residents every day—food, clothes, fuel, etc.—let it be collected by the village headman," the "Manu Laws" state. He had not yet become a hereditary representative of the royal administration or hereditary owner of the village, but tendencies to that effect were already emerging and developing. It is noteworthy, in particular, that in the *Milindapañha* he is named *grāmasāmiko*, "the master of the village". Under this name he is mentioned also in the *Arthaśāstra* (IV. 13). When the administrative functions had also passed over to him, he began to personify one of the lower units in the state administration. He was to see to it that law and order be maintained in the village and to report to the official superintendent of ten villages about all incidents and crimes committed (Manu, VII.116). He was entitled to impose fine on the villagers. "Traders in caravans may stay inside the villages when their valuables are made known (to village officers). What is stolen or killed from among these the master of the village shall make good, if it has not gone out at night. What is stolen or killed between villages, the superintendent of pastures shall make good. In regions without pastures, the officers for catching thieves (shall make good)". (*Arth.* IV.13; Kangle's translation).

Unfortunately, we do not know how the headman was remunerated—whether he received part of the collection from the village or a salary paid by the state.<sup>33</sup> The "Manu Laws" (VII.119) give evidence that he was granted certain rights to land (possibly revenues from a plot): "let the superintendent of ten villages enjoy (*bhujāta*) one *kula*,<sup>34</sup> the superintendent of twenty villages, five *kulas* and the superintendent of a hundred villages, a village".

The headman of a *grāma* was not only the most influential man, but also a very wealthy one. In the *Jātakas* (II.135), a story is told of how he gave poor tenants an old ox and demanded that it should be paid for from the new harvest, that is, he acted as a creditor.

And yet the village had retained much of its self-administration. The headman had to reckon with the villagers' opinion and to call together the full community members to discuss the major issues.<sup>35</sup> It should be said that as the influence of the village headman in the community grew, his role in the country's political life declined. While in the Vedic epoch he attended even coronation ceremonies, in the period when large states were emerging, he represented the state's executive power only in his village.<sup>36</sup>

When natural economy and poorly developed social relations prevailed, the ancient Indian village communities for a long time lived in isolation from one another and from the urban centres. This was noted also by Megasthenes,

who wrote that land tillers "never went to town" (Strabo, XV.1.40). However, gradually the isolation of the community was broken, especially in the more developed areas. As economy grew and the division of labour was accelerated, commodity relations began to penetrate the economy. Contacts between villages and villages and the centres of handicrafts and trade were being established. There began to appear villages which specialised in certain industries—smithy (*kammarāgāma*), carpentry (*vaddhakigāma*),<sup>37</sup> salt mining (*lonkagāma*),<sup>38</sup> etc. Some of them brought their produce to cities.

All this gave rise to profound changes inside the community. It was no longer a homogeneous unit: out of its full members, free agriculturists, the top segment of the community had been immersed, while, on the other hand, the segment of ruined community members had grown. Deprived of land<sup>39</sup> and occasionally even of implements of production, they were forced to look for employment on royal and private estates, or became tenants. The process of property differentiation in this way recruited new members for the bottom segments of the community, which made up the reserve force of the exploited groups.

### B. SLAVE LABOUR AND THE SCOPE OF ITS EMPLOYMENT

#### *The Karmakāras*

Over the past two decades the problem of slavery in ancient India has attracted the attention of many scholars,<sup>40</sup> including Soviet historians.<sup>41</sup> There has become apparent the difference in their views on the role of slave labour.<sup>42</sup> G. F. Ilyin justly notes that there can be no single solution to this problem which would apply to the whole of India: "Tribes and peoples lived in different natural conditions, created different types of economy and state, and developed at different rates. Therefore, a characteristic true of one region may prove wrong for another. But even within one and the same region there existed natural economy and commodity production, tribal relations and civic society, community and slave-holding economies. All this was further complicated by the existence of the castes as well as social groups subject to exploitation that took forms dissimilar to the exploitation of the slaves (hired labourers, tenants, lower castes)".<sup>43</sup>

Records of slaves and the employment of slave-labour occur as far back as Vedic and late Vedic literature,<sup>44</sup> but the institute of slavery became particularly developed in the latter half of the first millennium B.C. In the Mauryan epoch first attempts to classify slaves were made, the conditions under which they could be set free were specified, the rights of their owners were outlined in certain regulations, etc.

The thesis of the *Majjhima-Nikāya* about the division of Indian society



into free men (*arya*) and slaves (*dāsa*), alongside the *varṇa* division is well-known.<sup>45</sup> The author of the Buddhist text thought this to express the specific character of ancient India. Besides, the text underlines that a slave could become a free man, and a free man, a slave (*dāso hutvā ayyo hoti*).

In the same work and also in the *Dīgha-Nikāya* (II.72) the status of a slave is described: "If a man is a slave, he is not his own master (*anattādhīno*), he is subordinated to others (*parādhīno*), and cannot go where he wishes. If he is freed of slavery, he becomes his own master, is not subordinated to others and can go wherever he wishes".<sup>46</sup> In his commentary, Buddhaghosa explains: "the term *anattādhīno* means that a slave cannot do anything of his own accord, and *parādhīno*, that the slave must act at another's will".<sup>47</sup> The commentator contrasts a slave with a free man (*bhujisso*), who is his own master (*attano santako*). Thus, at that time one of the main characteristics of slavery was considered to be subordination to another, dependence on his will.<sup>48</sup> This idea was further developed in later sources, the *Śāstras*.<sup>49</sup> The slaves were considered a kind of thing, they were treated as a variety of domestic animals, an object to be possessed along with precious metals, sandal, wool, cattle and horses. Like cattle and other belongings, they were bequeathed and distributed between heirs,<sup>50</sup> donated, mortgaged and sold.<sup>51</sup> The *Arthaśāstra* even fixes the rules for the sale of these "bipeds" (III.15).

In the texts of the Buddhist and Jaina canons, slaves in the royal palace and the harem,<sup>52</sup> in the houses of wealthy townsmen<sup>53</sup> and villagers<sup>54</sup> are mentioned on numerous occasions.<sup>55</sup> That community members, too, had slaves is evident from Kauṭilya (II.35). The district administrator was to report the number of slaves living in the individual village households. "He should record the number of villages by fixing their boundaries, the number of fields by an enumeration of ploughed and unploughed (fields), dry and wet fields, parks, vegetable gardens . . . and (keep records) of houses by an enumeration of tax-payers and non-tax-payers. And in them, (he should record) so many are persons belonging to four *varṇas*, so many are farmers, cowherds, traders, artisans, labourers and *slaves*, so many are two-footed and four-footed creatures, and so much money, labour, duty and fines accrue from them". (Kangle's translation)

The state of this group of population was very hard indeed. The *Majjhima-Nikāya* tells of slaves working out of fear of punishment ("their eyes were filled with tears"). The master of a slave woman who had waked a little later than usual hit her with an iron doorbolt and broke her skull.<sup>56</sup> A runaway slave was caught and branded with redhot iron.<sup>57</sup> The owner of a slave had the right to retain him indefinitely.<sup>58</sup> The *Mahāvastu* (I.18) mentions slaves kept in fetters. According to most sources, slaves were forbidden to have any property.<sup>59</sup>

In assessing their status, both legal and actual (which need not have always been the same), it is necessary to discriminate between two types of slaves: slaves for life (evidently for the most part they were either slaves born in the house or prisoners of war) and slaves for a specified period. While the former could never abandon their status of bondage, which was extended to their offspring, the latter (for instance, those pledged) could recover freedom under certain conditions.<sup>60</sup> Ancient Indians divided both the groups into several categories (an attempt to classify them is reflected even in early Buddhist texts). For instance, the *Vinaya-piṭaka* (IV.224) lists slaves born in the house (*antojāla*), purchased slaves (*dhanakkīlo*) and slaves brought from a foreign country (*karamarānīto*);<sup>61</sup> in the *Dīgha-Nikāya* (II.35) a man is mentioned who became slave of his own free will (*sayam dāsavyam upagato*). These groups are referred to by Buddhaghosa when he explains the word *dāsa* (*tattha dāsā ti antojālakā vā dhanakkītā vā karamarānīlā vā sayam dāsavyam upagatā*).<sup>62</sup> Four kinds of slaves are listed in the *Vidhura-paṇḍita Jātaka*<sup>63</sup> and further three subdivisions are mentioned in the other *Jātakas*.<sup>64</sup>

In all likelihood, the classified lists did not exhaust all possible cases of reducing people to slavery. Sources mention others which are not included in the preceding lists.<sup>65</sup>

Gradually, the classification of slaves became more and more involved. While in the "Manu Laws" (VIII.415)<sup>66</sup> nine kinds of slaves are mentioned, in Nārada there are as many as fifteen. The development of the institute of slavery is witnessed also by the elaboration of the questions of emancipation. For the most part this dealt with the category of temporary slaves, that is, slaves reduced to this status for a specified period (debtors, persons given in pledge, etc.).<sup>67</sup> Their emancipation depended on their masters' will,<sup>68</sup> but at the same time could also take place after they had cleared their debt by their work or when a ransom was paid for them.<sup>69</sup> The rite of emancipation was simple: the master sprinkled the slave's head with water and declared him to be free (*bhujissa adāsa*).

For a study of slavery in the period under consideration it appears to be highly promising to compare the data of the *Arthaśāstra* with those of other *śāstras* and also with earlier Buddhist texts. This makes it possible to bring to light some essential features of the phenomenon and to make out the stands of various political and legislative schools and to trace the evolution of the views of slave-labour and the status of slaves.<sup>70</sup> It should be borne in mind that the picture outlined in the *śāstras* setting forth a kind of legislative rules is somewhat ideal rather than real.

The approach to problems of slavery in the *Arthaśāstra* is a practical one, determined by the need for protecting the interests of the state-authority and the free Aryas, including those temporarily enslaved. A special chapter in

the treatise is concerned with slaves and *karmakāras* (*dāsakarmakāraśāstra*, "a Law concerning slaves and labourers", III.13). It is one of the first attempts at establishing the general norms regulating the status of slaves and the exploitation of their labour. It contains a list of categories of slaves, which is more detailed than those given in Buddhist literature; the difference between the slaves for life and temporary slaves is strictly fixed. In earlier sources this difference was not specially emphasised.

Kauṭilya draws a sharp borderline between Aryas and Mlecchas, and lists the kinds of punishment for reducing free members of the four varṇas to slavery. "For one selling or keeping as a pledge a minor Arya individual except a slave for livelihood," the fine is twelve *paṇas* for a kinsman in the case of a Śūdra, double that in the case of a Vaiśya, three times in the case of a Kṣatriya, four times in the case of Brāhmin.

"For a stranger, the lowest, the middle and the highest fines" and death" are the punishment (respectively), also for purchasers and witnesses. It is not an offence for Mlecchas to sell an offspring or keep it as a pledge. But there shall be no slavery for an Arya in any circumstances whatsoever" (Kangle's translation).

A set of rules was intended to protect a free man who had been reduced to temporary slavery under some circumstances. "After keeping as a pledge an Arya when the family has bound itself in times of distress of Aryas, they shall, on finding the redemption-amount, redeem first a minor or one who renders help" (Kangle's translation). "And he shall become an Arya", Kauṭilya says, "by paying the price".

From an owner who had not released a slave when offered an appropriate ransom, a fine of 12 *paṇas* was to be levied. The same amount was to be paid by a person hindering the redemption. It was prohibited to repledge a slave after he had been ransomed. Violation of this rule was fined by 12 *paṇas*. "If a person does not make a slave an Arya for a suitable ransom, the fine is twelve *paṇas*, and confinement (for him) till he does it."

"If after ransoming a male or a female slave, a person again sells or pledges him, the fine is twelve *paṇas*, except in the case of those who themselves agree" (Kangle's translation).

All this makes it possible to suppose that in Kauṭilya's time the power of the master over his pledged slaves was to some extent limited" (it is probable, however, that these rules reflected the aspiration of the *Arthaśāstra*'s author rather than the actual state of affairs).

The offspring of temporary slaves were considered free and could even receive the patrimony left by their father. "The offspring begotten by the master on his own female slave shall be known as free along with the mother" (Kangle's translation).

Coming out in defence of people who had fallen into temporary dependence, Kauṭilya demands that they should not be charged with the dirty work which was not normally performed by free people (even Śūdras). "Making a pledge pick up a corpse, dung, urine or leavings of food, and making women (pledges) give bath to a naked person, giving corporal punishment to them and dishonouring them shall result in the loss of the capital". In later Śāstras this rule was revised.<sup>15</sup>

Some provisions referred directly to the slaves for livelihood. In the Buddhist literature they were treated as the owner's property and their destiny wholly depended on their master's will. The *Arthaśāstra*, however, made certain restrictions for the slaveowner: "If one employs in vile work or in a foreign land, a slave less than eight years of age, without kinsmen and unwilling (to do that work), from among any of the four types—(a slave) born in the house, received in inheritance, obtained (as a present) and purchased—or if one sells or pledges a female slave who is enceinte without providing for the nourishment of the foetus, the lowest fine for violence (shall be imposed), also on purchasers and witnesses" (Kangle's translation).

According to Buddhist sources, a prisoner of war, as has been mentioned above, was treated as a slave for livelihood. The *Arthaśāstra*, however, adds an elaboration designed to protect the free man. "An Arya individual captured under the banner (*dhvajāhṛtaḥ*) should be freed by suitable work for a specified period or for half the price". Kauṭilya tried to prevent the unavoidable lifelong slavery for prisoners of war (and thus their severing all ties with their mother country).<sup>16</sup> This was obviously the reason underlying the prohibition of taking a child slave away to foreign lands.

The authors of the later Śāstras are primarily concerned with protecting the interest of Brāhmins, leaving the "slave's lot" to Śūdras. Moreover, according to Yājñavalkya, Viṣṇu and Kātyāyana, not only Śūdras and Vaiśyas but also Kṣatriyas could become slaves. This stand of Yājñavalkya and his followers pictures the rules on slavery in an altogether new light.<sup>17</sup>

In investigating slavery the role played by slave labour and the question of the ratio of slave labour in the productive activities are of paramount importance. The sources available warrant the conclusion that it was employed in the main spheres of economic activity in ancient India: agriculture (clearing land of woods, tilling fields, sowing, harvesting, tending cattle, etc.) and handicrafts. According to Kauṭilya (the chapter on the "Director of Agriculture"), slaves worked on royal estates, while the *Jātakas* and *Buddhagoṣa*<sup>18</sup> cite evidence to the effect that slaves worked on the state-owned lands of republican associations, evidently *gaṇas* (Koliyas and Śākya).

From the Buddhist and Jaina sources we know about the employment of slave labour in private farms,<sup>79</sup> both agricultural and cattle-breeding. In the *Mahāvagga* (VI.34.2), a large farm is described, whose owner had a slave famous for his enormous strength: his ploughshare cut seven furrows at once. In his commentary on the *Suttanipāta* (II.14), Buddhaghōṣa narrates about a big cattle-breeding farm (30,000 heads of cattle including 27,000 milch cows), where slaves and labourers worked. Owners of medium-sized and small plots also used slaves, although these were of course not numerous (sometimes one or two). The same was done by communities (in all probability, they had some slaves at their disposal).<sup>80</sup>

Slave labour was also employed on monastery lands.<sup>81</sup> They could not be admitted to the *saṅgha* but they were included in the group of the monastery servants (*ārāṃikas*) or *kapiyakarākas* (a group of higher social standing), who tilled the land, harvested the crops, looked after the irrigation works, etc.<sup>82</sup> Evidence to this effect is particularly abundant in post-Mauryan sources.<sup>83</sup>

According to Buddhaghōṣa, the word *ārāṃikas* applied to various categories of dependent people (slaves and impoverished free men) who served the monks. He reported that the king and some private persons had donated to the *saṅgha* slaves (*dāsa*), "born in the house" and "bought".<sup>84</sup> Different categories of *ārāṃikas* worked on different terms: some were engaged every day either for the whole day or for half the day, while others were employed once every five days or even once every fortnight. For this they received food and grain.<sup>85</sup> Interesting evidence on monastery slaves has been preserved in mediaeval commentaries.<sup>86</sup>

It should be noted that small farms had no particular need for slave labour. Moreover, this most troublesome kind of property, to use Plato's expression, called for very strict supervision. Slaves were more numerous on larger private farms, but even these found it more profitable to use hired labourers (*karmakāras*), who could be employed at the height of harvest-time. Likewise they were mostly used to till the plots granted out of the state lands to individual groups of Brāhmins or provincial officials. Temporary tenants on state lands (*karada*) tilled their plots themselves. Even on royal estates, where supervision was no problem, slave-labour did not predominate.

In the period under study most farms which employed slave-labour were natural economics, and every community was an economically independent unit supplying its members with all the necessities of normal life. However, some farms had already established links with the market, and the products obtained by means of slave-labour were thus acquiring a commodity form.<sup>87</sup>

Judging from the sources, slaves were used in handicrafts, but their number was not large. In D. Chanana's opinion, this was due to the fact that craftsmen were unwilling to reveal to outsiders the secrets of their trade.<sup>88</sup> True, in the *Arthaśāstra* (II.23) it is reported that slaves worked at the king's textile manufactories.<sup>89</sup> There are similar reports relating to private workshops.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, there are reports about weaver-slaves (*pesakāradāsa*) and dyers (*rajakadāsa*) in monasteries.

However, on the whole, slave-labour was not predominant either in agriculture or in handicrafts.<sup>91</sup> It could not compete with the labour of free community members and hired labourers of various categories. This was evidently due to the specifics of slavery in ancient India, where it was not well-developed. This was expressed by the fact that similar work was done by slaves and by free and half-free hired labourers<sup>92</sup> and by the similarity of their actual status.<sup>93</sup> In most ancient Indian texts—Brāhmanic, Buddhist and Jaina—the two groups of actual producers are often mentioned together.<sup>94</sup>

There constantly recurs even a kind of formula to describe labourers in various spheres of economic activity—*dāsakarmakāra* (Pali, *dāsakammakāra*) "slaves and karmakāras".

The *Arthaśāstra* (II.24) sets down the rule for meting out food to slaves, alongside gardeners, cowherds and karmakaras.<sup>95</sup> In Patañjali (III.1.26), slaves and karmakars are mentioned together as persons working for food and clothes. They were distinguished from craftsmen who worked for pay.<sup>96</sup> Nārada (V.25) unites slaves and karmakāras together in one group, but remarks that the former do vile work and the latter clean work. According to Medhātithi (commentator on Manu, VIII.415), the difference between slavery (*dāsyam*) and service (*paricaryā*) consists in the fact that slaves do "low" work and have to perform it at any time.<sup>97</sup>

In other words, slaves were usually included in the same group as some categories of free labourers.<sup>98</sup> It might be supposed that this was due to the conditions of work on royal estates<sup>99</sup> rather than to the peculiarities of the institution of slavery as a whole; however, the sources contain evidence of an identical situation obtaining also on private estates and in monasteries.

Sometimes slaves are mentioned together with karmakāras and servants (*peṣṣā*)—*dāsaṭṭakammakāras*. According to the commentary, the *peṣṣā* received their pay before they began their work, and the karmakāras, got their food and pay after work.<sup>100</sup> In the *Majjhima-Nikāya* (I.344) slaves, karmakāras and servants are generally described as people working for fear of punishment and whose speech and way of thinking were different from their masters (I.430).<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Indian lexicographers sometimes drew no distinction between slaves and servants.<sup>102</sup> "Servants" (*bhṛtya*) sometimes designated slaves, karmakāras and other labourers. D. Chanana noted that it is

often impossible to distinguish whether this or that work was performed solely by slaves, for slaves and servants are mentioned together indiscriminately.<sup>103</sup>

In this context it would be appropriate to recall also the *ārāmikas* on monasterial estates. Slaves and various groups of free labourers (impoverished, deprived of the means of production, etc.) were considered together in a single category of "monastery servants", which also seems to reflect the specifics of ancient Indian slaveholding (true, it should be borne in mind that Buddhaghosa's commentary was written in the 5th cent.).

Many authors who have discussed this problem in general terms have emphasised that slaves were mostly used in house-keeping.<sup>104</sup> Although in India this embraced many production processes, such as grinding grain, sorting out cotton and husking rice, spinning, weaving, and repair and building work,<sup>105</sup> there is a strong case for this opinion. The wide use of slave labour for housekeeping was indeed a typical feature of ancient Indian slave ownership.<sup>106</sup> As has been justly remarked by G. F. Ilyin, "the main sphere where slave-labour was employed was housework".<sup>107</sup> Sources contain numerous data on the types of work done.<sup>108</sup> There is even a special term denoting house slaves—*gharadāsa*, *gehadāsī*. In commenting on Manu (IX.143) Medhātithi included in this group cooks, washermen and valets (*prasādhaka*).<sup>109</sup> The *Jātakas* mention that slaves, men and women, used to take food to their masters working in the field.<sup>110</sup>

There are interesting reports in the Buddhist sources that sometimes slaves were sent to work for money but they had to bring their earnings to their master. It appears that in many cases their upkeep in the house involved considerable expense.<sup>111</sup>

Authors from various countries have repeatedly pointed to the patriarchal nature of slavery in ancient India reminding us of that in the ancient Greek and Roman states. "The primitive forms of slavery, which are often defined in literature as patriarchal slavery had survived up to the emergence of the feudal formation, probably even longer."<sup>112</sup>

Alongside instances of cruel treatment of slaves, sources contain much evidence to the contrary.<sup>113</sup> Sometimes "the position of slaves practically did not differ from that of the other house-menials and even from the junior members of the family".<sup>114</sup> The patriarchal pattern of relations between master and slave was due to the poor development of slavery in ancient India. It is in this light that the data of the sources on slaves having families, property, etc. can be interpreted.<sup>115</sup>

It is not impossible that it were these features of ancient Indian slavery that gave Megasthenes grounds to assert that "all the Indians are free, and not one of them is a slave".<sup>116</sup> Further Megasthenes (as rendered by Arrian)



says, "In this lied the similarity between the Lacedaemonians and the Indians. But the Lacedaemonians' slaves are the Helots who do what is fit for slaves to do; with the Indians, contrarywise, no one else is a slave, *let alone an Indian*". This statement by the Seleucid ambassador was called in question even in antique times<sup>117</sup> and although it is used by present-day scholars as an argument to prove the occasional character of that phenomenon,<sup>118</sup> ancient Indian writings contain proofs to the contrary. The closing words of the statement can be viewed from a different standpoint by comparing it with Kauṭilya's words: "But there shall be no slavery (*dāśabhāva*) for an Arya in any circumstances whatsoever". It is tempting to think that when he spoke about the absence of slavery in India, Megasthenes meant that there were only limitations to reducing free men to slavery for livelihood. Such practices might have existed in Candragupta's time and could have been reflected later in the *Arthasāstra*.

In the Mauryan age a great diversity of social patterns existed in India. In some areas of the subcontinent, tribal relations still prevailed, and it is possible that Megasthenes' evidence applied only to one of the areas which he visited on his way to the capital or with which he got acquainted later during his stay in India.<sup>119</sup>

The authors often compare slavery in ancient India with that in Greece and Rome, considering the latter two as a "kind of standard".<sup>120</sup> A comparison of this kind is rather nominal. We judge classical slavery only by some centres of the ancient world, which could have been a deviation from the norm and the general line of evolution, rather than the rule.<sup>121</sup>

Along with community members and slaves, hired labourers<sup>122</sup> (usually called *karmakāra*, Pali *kammakāra*)<sup>123</sup> constituted an important group of the immediate producers of material wealth.

According to the *Arthasāstra* (II.24), they worked on royal farming estates (along with slaves and those "paying off their fines by manual labour"). A special "Director of Agriculture" was assigned to see that those working had no obstacles owing to disrepair of farm implements and tools and owing to the absence of draught animals.

In the Chapter "Settlement of the Countryside" (II.1), Kauṭilya advised the king to settle the new lands upon Śūdra agriculturists (*śūdrakarṣaka*). They were allotted vacant plots from the state lands. In R. S. Sharma's opinion, these settlers had the capacity of temporary peasants<sup>124</sup> but it is probable that they were a kind of hired labourers or dependent tenants employed by the state for a fixed period to till uncultivated land. In the commentary on the text (III.13), *karṣaka* is explained as *karmakāra*.

As a rule, Śūdras possessed no plots of their own and were hired as labourers to work in other men's households. That their labour was exten-



sively used in agriculture is borne out by the fact that the *Majjhima-Nikāya* (II.180) makes it a point of defining a *śūdra's* duties: he works with the sickle and carries grain.

In Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Samyutta-Nikāya* (I.72), the ceremony dedicated to the beginning of ploughing upon a Brāhman's estate is described. Five hundred festively dressed land tillers (*kassakapurisa*) came out into the field. Some of them ploughed land (*ekeko kasati*), others scattered seeds (*ekeko vapati*). It is remarkable that the text makes no mention of slaves.

Sources contain other data on employment of *karmakāras* in private households (in monarchies and republics).<sup>125</sup> Among these professional land tillers are mentioned (*kasinī katvā jīvikaṃ kappentassa*).<sup>126</sup> Many of them worked merely against a daily pittance.<sup>127</sup> It is interesting that Buddhaghosa interpreted *karmakāra* as those "who are supplied with food in payment for work" (*kammakāra ti bhattavetanabhatā*).<sup>128</sup>

*Karmakāras* toiled on plots of community members and the farms of their employment were to be made known to the neighbours. It is possible that this rule was intended to prevent all kinds of violations and to prevent concentration of labourers at the peak of harvest-time in some households to the detriment of others. According to the *Arthaśāstra* (II.1), hired labour was used during the construction of irrigation systems, "Instead of a man who evades work along with the others to build an irrigation unit his *karmakāras* and bullocks must do this work". The data of Kauṭilya's treatise (III.13) also attest that *karmakāras* tilled communal lands, etc.

They worked also in monasteries.<sup>129</sup> One group of monasterial labourers, *bhikkhubhaṭikā*, is mentioned by Buddhaghosa (Pap. III.8). According to him they worked for the *vihāra* and "lived at the monks' expense".

Hired labour was also employed in handicrafts—in royal<sup>130</sup> and private workshops,<sup>131</sup> in trade,<sup>132</sup> and in housekeeping.<sup>133</sup> In other words it was used extensively in various spheres of production. All this makes it possible to assume that "hired labourers played a no lesser role in the economy than slaves,"<sup>134</sup> and probably even a greater one. There are grounds to suppose that the fact that many people (mainly impoverished *śūdras*) were willing to do any work on any terms and in any season, accounted for the limited use of land in husbandry.

### C. SOME GENERAL REMARKS

As regards the Mauryan epoch, it seems justified to assume in it the existence of the primitive, communal and slave-owning structures, even though their respective roles and correlation between these must have been

different in the different regions of the country. In the more developed regions—Magadha and the neighbouring areas—slavery was widespread, whereas in some of the more outlying regions the tribal system still prevailed.

In the epoch under consideration the communal, or petty natural socio-economic structure was probably not a mere survival of the tribal system or an element of the primitive communal system, as some authors postulate,<sup>135</sup> but existed as a special type of social economy, which determined the way of life of the class concerned.<sup>136</sup> A member of the community appears to have been the key figure in husbandry, which was the main branch of economy. The free members of the community were the main producers of material wealth.<sup>137</sup> The owners of small land plots, however, did not need the labour of a large number of slaves. Nevertheless, it was already pregnant with elements of antagonistic relations, for in it, contradictions between the well-off top segment and the exploited lower strata of the community had become more clearly pronounced.<sup>138</sup> Apart from slaves, hired labourers, formally free but often living in a state of semi-bondage, were widely employed in all spheres of economic activity, and in husbandry various groups of tenants were active. The existence of various categories of hired labourers limited the scope of employment of slaves.

Indian history shows quite clearly the trends typical of ancient class societies—the trend of the exploiters to deprive the immediate producers of property and their efforts to appropriate the very personality of the producers. The state as well as big private owners tried to expand the scope of exploitation and to encompass within it ever greater sections of impoverished community members and others. The economic structure of ancient society rested on direct relations of dominating and subordination.<sup>139</sup> Although the slaves did not make up the sole exploited group, slavery was the predominant form of exploitation.<sup>140</sup>

It should be noted that the multiple pattern of social structure, an inherent feature of every ancient society which outgrew the primitive community, was not, however, a mere sumtotal or merger of structures, but an involved intertwine of these elements, often giving rise to a real tangle in social relations. Thus, in the Mauryan epoch primitive and community structures were waning and decaying while slavery was being strengthened. This was expressed particularly in the growth of the state-owned and large private estates (to the detriment of the community), where slave-labour was employed on a fairly large scale. A comparison between the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan epochs shows a growth of the share of slave labour in the latter. It is proper to emphasise once more the simultaneous existence of a number of different societies in Mauryan India. Some of these were class societies, others were still at the level of the tribal system, while

still others were on the way to transition from the pre-class formation to various types of class-formations.

Karl Marx wrote that "the same economic basis—the same from the standpoint of its main conditions—due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc. . . . " may show "infinite variations and traditions in appearance".<sup>141</sup> It would be "unjustified pedantry" to determine with the precision of an apothecary's where one relation ends and another scale begins, giving rise to a new class.<sup>142</sup> Later, at the time when feudalism had become predominant "a feudal guise was assumed even by such relations that were remote in essence from feudalism".<sup>143</sup>

Some authors point out the existence of a feudal structure<sup>144</sup> and feudal relations<sup>145</sup> in that period. In 1929, arguments to that effect were advanced by the Indian scholar Pran Nath;<sup>146</sup> however, his arguments were subjected to drastic criticism. At present most Soviet and foreign<sup>147</sup> scholars date the formation of feudal relations in India from the middle of the first millennium A.D.,<sup>148</sup> although some authors admit that feudalism existed there even in the 5th-1st cent. B.C.

The exponents of the view that in ancient India there existed the feudal structure, point to the existing private feudal land tenure represented by the forms of complete and incomplete private feudal property—the main types of feudal land tenure found in mediæval India. They also point to the evidence of the *Arthaśāstra*, the "Manu Laws", and the later Śāstras (for example, the *Viṣṇu-smṛiti*). However, first of all, the dating of these documents must be taken into account. It has already been mentioned that they took shape in the first centuries A.D. and therefore they reflected certain features of the new period, a period in which feudal relations were already emerging. Even the presence in the Śāstras of some reports that can be interpreted from the standpoint of the exponents of feudalism seems to us to be evidence of the beginning of feudalisation rather than of the continuing development of the feudal relations which supposedly had emerged in the antiquity.

Ancient sources (including those related to the Mauryan epoch: the Buddhist texts, Dharmasūtras) contain numerous data on private land ownership and private land estates.<sup>149</sup> But it is only with the beginning of first centuries A.D. that their conversion into estates of a feudal type can be traced.<sup>150</sup> It was at that time that feudal relations were taking shape to become predominant in, or even after the middle of the first millennium.

In some ancient Indian texts there are reports of gifts of villages by the king. Such grants are sometimes regarded as feudal-type<sup>151</sup> landed estates. However, the sources (and commentaries on them) emphasise that what is

meant by "donation" is merely the transfer of the right to collect the tax from the village and not the right to the land as such.<sup>153</sup> Some later inscriptions stated specially that the villagers were to pay to Brāhmins, on whom the village had been bestowed, the taxes which they had previously paid to the state. The person for whose benefit the tax had been collected was thus changed but neither the size of the tax nor the status of the residents were. It is noteworthy that in a "donation settlement" the amount of land and the number of peasants were never indicated; there were no personal relations between the latter and the recipient of the gift.<sup>154</sup> As N. N. Kher justly remarks, "the royal benefactors granted to the Buddhist monks a privilege to enjoy such immunities. There is, however, nothing to suggest that the state relinquished the proprietary rights of the lands donated to them" (see: N. N. Kher, *Agrarian and Fiscal Economy in the Mauryan and Post-Mauryan Age*, p. 66).

A passage from the *Arthaśāstra* is often quoted stating that: "he (the king) should grant lands to priests, preceptors, chaplains and learned Brāhmaṇas, land as gifts to Brāhmaṇas (*brahmadeyāni*), exempt from fines and taxes (*adaṇḍakarāṇi*) and yielding suitable (revenue)" (II.1). It should be kept in mind, however, that this passage is in the chapter prescribing the procedure for settling vacant land, which was considered to be owned by the state. The Brāhmaṇas who received such plots did not become their owners but were merely exempt from the obligations normally imposed on temporary tenants of such plots. Judging by the text, this privilege was enjoyed not by all Brāhmaṇas but only by some categories: Śrotriyas, Purohitas, etc.<sup>154</sup> According to Kauṭilya, these Brāhmaṇas could not sell or mortgage the plots to the members of other *varṇas*. As N. N. Kher remarks: "It is obvious that the state was mindful of the loss of revenue by their frequent alienations to others. In this sense, they were not absolute owners of such lands possessing full rights of gift, sale and transfer, etc." (see N. N. Kher, *Agrarian and Fiscal Economy* . . . p.77). "The Brāhmaṇas," he goes on to say, "were owners or landlords to the extent of enjoying only the revenues of the land granted to them which were formerly claimed by the King or his officials" (*ibid*, p. 79).

It is noteworthy that in the epigraphy the Brāhmaṇas who received plots of land (*brahmadeya*) are referred to as users (*Bhojakas*) in the sense that they were granted land for "enjoyment", but not as the owners with full proprietary rights. Some scholars suppose, not without reason, that exemption from taxes on land granted to Brāhmaṇas (*brahmadeya*) is observed only in the period when the *Arthaśāstra* was compiled. The early Pāli texts contain no indication as to their receiving any administrative rights or even exemption from taxes.<sup>155</sup>

From the epigraphy of the Sātavāhana epoch it is clear that the king could donate to Brāhmaṇas and followers of other creeds, small plots from his own lands. If there was no vacant land, he had to buy land from a private owner and then could dispose of it at his own discretion.<sup>155</sup>

Judging by the data in the Sātavāhana epigraphy, some rights in the Deccan began to be conveyed, in the 2nd cent., and in North India even later.<sup>157</sup> Compared with Kauṭilya's evidence, only the Gupta data show that *brahmadeya* was linked with some administrative rights.<sup>158</sup> In that period granting various rights was already due to the beginning of feudalisation.<sup>159</sup>

In the "Manu Laws" (VII.115-119), it is stated that a headman should be appointed for each village, a superintendent for ten villages, a superintendent for twenty and for one hundred villages, as well as a superintendent for a thousand villages. "Let the superintendent of ten villages use one *kula* (of land);<sup>160</sup> that of twenty, five *kulas*; and that of a hundred villages, one village; and the superintendent of a thousand villages, a town" (a similar statement is contained in the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*, III.7-10). The text refers only to local provincial administration; the central authorities were apparently remunerated from the treasury.<sup>161</sup>

In the "Manu Laws" (VII.125-126) it is also stated that lower officials in the royal service were to receive a monthly salary in money.

This system of grants "in itself is not evidence of feudal relations, for there are no grounds to believe that the land became the grantee's property or that the residents of these villages and towns became personally dependent on him".<sup>162</sup> As N. N. Kher justly writes: "There is nothing to show that the state lost its hold over the land granted to the grantees" (see N. N. Kher, *Agrarian and Fiscal Economy*, p. 75). However, this practice favoured the emergence of such relations. As to the farming-out of offices, it was not, as Karl Marx notes, purely feudal, as proved by Rome.<sup>163</sup>

Studies in the socio-economic system of ancient India justly draw attention to the passage in the *Arthaśāstra* concerning land grants to state servants (II.1).<sup>164</sup> When settling new areas, i.e., the state-owned lands, the king was advised to give plots to provincial officials of various ranks "without the right to sell or mortgage" (*vikrayādihānavarjāni*). It is to be assumed that such plots were given only in developing new areas, and that this was not the general practice. Evidence in Kauṭilya's treatise is similar to the reports in the "Manu Laws". It refers only to some classes of officials and does not imply that all of them received land or the right to collect taxes from villages. Other passages in the *Arthaśāstra* (V.3) suggest that granting land to state officials took place only in isolated cases.

Unlike the land granted to officials, the land given to the Brāhmaṇas, according to Kangle's interpretation, could be inherited (evidently, such

privileges were enjoyed not by all Brāhmaṇas but only by the categories listed in the *Arthaśāstra*). The existence of Brahmana's plots whose owners were entitled to bequeath their land, may be evidence of the emergence of feudal-type relations in the epoch when the *Arthaśāstra* was compiled.<sup>165</sup>

According to the treatise, state servants were usually given a rigidly fixed salary in money and sometimes a small extra amount of grain.<sup>166</sup> Any tangible changes in their remuneration did not occur until the 5th-6th cent.,<sup>167</sup> which was already a sign of the emergence of feudalism.<sup>168</sup>

In our view, the data discussed above does not provide sufficient grounds for the assertion that as early as the 6th-1st cent. B.C. (that is, in the epoch preceding the recording of the *Arthaśāstra* and most of the Śāstras) feudal relations played an important part.

While rejecting that view of the feudal relations and the feudal structure in ancient India we are nevertheless prepared to admit that even in the Mauryan epoch, which marked the peak of the development of the institute of slavery, there existed phenomena which, though not feudal in essence, comprised elements of a tendency towards the emergence, under certain conditions, of the feudal mode of production. These were tenancy-relations,<sup>169</sup> the existence of private landed estates, the practice of donation of land, land-grants, monastery land-tenure, etc.

Especially significant were the grants to Brāhmaṇas which could be bequeathed and which thus turned into hereditary holdings, and gradually evidently became absolute holdings, holdings in perpetuity.

In the specific conditions of ancient India with the dominant position of the community, the limited use of slave-labour, the obsolescence of many of the social institutions and the existence of some survivals of the relations of the tribal system, the preceding phenomena heralded the future, feudal relations. Sometimes outwardly they resembled feudal-type relations, but in the Mauryan epoch they were not yet, either in their essence or in their function (their role in the social structure), elements of the feudal mode of production.

As to the evidence of the *Arthaśāstra* and the "Manu Laws" quoted in support of the thesis about the feudal structure in ancient India, it should be related to the post-Mauryan period, an epoch when feudal relations were actually taking shape and consolidating. This does not imply that this path of development was followed in all parts of the vast empire. Feudalisation proceeded differently in the different regions of the country. In the Deccan and some Southern areas it was accelerated by the poor development of slavery,<sup>170</sup> while in other regions the transition to the formation of a feudal type proceeded not through slavery but directly on the primary formation.<sup>171</sup>

In analysing the origins of feudalism in India we must bear in mind

the system of relations of production of which "inception, functioning and transition to a higher form, conversion into another social organism are governed by specific laws".<sup>171</sup> Hence, it is necessary not merely to identify the peculiarities of the socio-economic relations, but also to investigate "the basis of society, which clothes itself in political and legal garbs and indefinite trends of social thought".<sup>172</sup> The problem of the structure of ancient Indian society is rather intricate and calls for further investigation and analysis of additional evidence. All the aspects of the problem as a whole should be examined not in isolation but in direct correlation with one another.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> At the same time, some Indian scholars realise the importance of studies related to the Indian community. As A. S. Altekar has put it, the real history of India is the history of its village communities. A. S. Altekar, *A History of Village...*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Soviet authors attach great importance to this issue. See: I. M. Dyakonov, *Obschina na drevnem Vostoke v rubotakh sovetskikh issledovateley* [The Community in the Ancient Orient in Works by Soviet Scholars], "Vestnik drevney istorii" ["Bulletin of Ancient History"] 1963, No. 1, pp. 16-34 (this paper also gives bibliography); L. B. Alayev, *Yuzhnaya Indiya* [South India]; E. M. Medvedev, *Opyt issledovaniya drevneindiyskoi obschiny po dannym toponimiki*. [Essay on the Study of the Ancient Indian Community on the Basis of Toponymics],—"Indiya v drevnosti" ["India in Ancient Times"], Moscow, 1964; *Obschina i sotsialnaya organizatsiya u narodov Vostochnoi i Yugo-Vostochnoi Azii* [The Community and the Social Organisation among Peoples of East and Southeast Asia], Leningrad, 1967; *Istoriya Indii v sredniye veka* [History of India in the Middle Ages].

<sup>3</sup> I. M. Dyakonov, *Obschina na drevnem Vostoke...*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya* [Ancient India], p. 363.

<sup>5</sup> "It is necessary to take into account the local peculiarities of the community organizations, determined by the specific historical, geographical, and ethnic factors, in particular by the isolation of some areas. Thus, simultaneous existence of different types of community is possible at each historical stage..." (E. M. Medvedev, *Opyt issledovaniya drevneindiyskoi obschiny*, p. 218).

<sup>6</sup> See: *Arth.* II.1.

<sup>7</sup> N. Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, pp. 13-18.

<sup>8</sup> A little village was called *gāmaka* (VP, I.208).

<sup>9</sup> *Arth.* III.9; J.II.358; B. C. Sen, *Economics in Kautilya*, p. 130.

The problem of boundaries was so important that, according to the *Arthasāstra* (III.9), a dispute on this subject between two villages could be settled by the verdict passed by the residents of five or ten neighbouring villages.

<sup>10</sup> For more detail, see: V. S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, pp. 141-143; M. Singh, *Life...*, pp. 193-196.

<sup>11</sup> A. Ray, *Villages...*, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> J.II.109-110. The Jātaka tells of a plot of arable land (*vaṇkhetta*—"barley field") which was under the collective supervision of all villagers.

<sup>13</sup> Judging by the *Arth.* (II.1), the king was to allot for pastures, lands unfit for ploughing.

<sup>14</sup> One of the Jātakas (II.76) mentions a fruit tree owned by a whole village.

<sup>15</sup> Among the principal sources of revenue received by the "superintendent of the store" (II.15), mention is made of the *piṇḍakara* tax, which, in the commentator Bhaṭṭasvāmīn's opinion, was a common tax levied on villages (U. N. Ghoshal, *Contribution...*, p. 37).

<sup>16</sup> The significance of this point is underlined by R. S. Sharma (*Indian Feudalism...*, pp. 62-63).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, J.I.277; III.162-163.

<sup>18</sup> V. S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> Manu, VIII.262-265; *Arth.* III.9-10. According to the *Arthasāstra* for stealing another man's crop, the thief, if he had been a member of the same community, was to compensate 50 times over; if he belonged to another community, he was put to death.



## STRUCTURE OF ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

<sup>20</sup> As I. M. Dyakonov notes, "the community may in principle claim its right of the owner of land at any time, the right which may lie dormant, but which evidently never dies off completely (*Osnovniye cherty drevnego obshchestva* [*Main Features of Ancient Society*], p. 132).

<sup>21</sup> B. W. Puri, *India in the Time of Patañjali*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>22</sup> P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. III, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup> From the Sāñci inscriptions, dated from the 3rd-2nd cent. B.C., we know about a collective gift to Buddhist communities by the residents of a village. Similar evidence is contained in the inscriptions from Bhāṭṭiprolu (*EI*, vol. II, pp. 87, 232 ff.).

<sup>24</sup> For women's participation in collective works, see J.I.199-201. The more recent *Byhaspatismṛti* lists the kinds of work carried out by all community members: repairs to the assembly hall and the temple, cleaning the garden, the pond, etc.

<sup>25</sup> P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. III, pp. 156-157.

<sup>26</sup> *Gautama*, X, 31-32; *Viṣṇu*, III.32.

<sup>27</sup> For more detail, see, *JBORS*, vol. XII, p. 198; R. S. Sharma, *Sūdras*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>28</sup> J.III.8.

<sup>29</sup> *Grāmam abhyupetya*, see: Kangle, II, p. 259. The text specially stresses that the community itself (*grāma eva*) was invested with the right to punish.

<sup>30</sup> Data of the *Jātakas*, see: U. N. Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Public Life*, vol. II, pp. 164-165.

<sup>31</sup> A. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy...*, vol. I, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, pp. 195-197.

<sup>33</sup> In the *Arthaśāstra* (V.3), payment of 500 paṇas to *grāma-bhṛtakas* ("servants of the village"?) is mentioned. R. Kangle supposed that the text might pertain to the *grāmika*, the head of the village, Kangle, III, p. 197.

<sup>34</sup> Here *Kula* is a certain plot of land.

<sup>35</sup> *Milindapañho*, p. 147.

<sup>36</sup> For more detail, see: K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*; R. S. Sharma, *Aspects...*; A. S. Altekar, *State and Government in Ancient India*, p. 161.

<sup>37</sup> J.III.281.

<sup>38</sup> J.I.18; J.III.89.

<sup>39</sup> The impoverished members of a community ceded their plots for temporary usage and, unable to reimburse the necessary sum on expiration of the time agreed, lost them, i.e., they practically ceased to be full and rightful members of the community. The *Arthaśāstra* lays that if a temporary tenant used an immovable asset land for twenty years, the right of the proprietor could pass over to him. Irrigation embankments (*setubandha*) passed to the new owner after five years, III.9.

<sup>40</sup> Dev Raj Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1960; W. Ruben, *Die Lage der Sklaven in altindischen Gesellschaft*, 1957; by the same author, *Die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung im alten Indien*, Berlin, Bd I (1967), Bd II (1968); R. S. Sharma, *Sūdras...*; by the same author, *Light...*; D. D. Kosambi, *Introduction...*; U. N. Ghoshal, *Studies...*; Y. Bongert, *Reflexions sur le problème de l'esclavage dans l'Inde ancienne à propos de quelques ouvrages récents*, *BEFEO*, 1963, t. I.I, No. 1, pp. 143-194.

<sup>41</sup> A. M. Osipov, *Kratky ocherk...*; D. A. Suleikin, *Osnovniye voprosy periodizatsii istorii drevney Indii*, 'Basic Problems of the Periodization of the History of Ancient India',—"Uchenye zapiski Tikhookeanskogo Instituta", "Transactions of the Pacific Institute" v.II, 1949; G. F. Ilyin, *Shudry i raby v drevneindiyskikh sbornikakh zakonov*, 'Sudras and Slaves in Ancient Indian Codes of Laws', "Vestnik drevney istorii", "Bulletin of Ancient History", 1950, No. 2, by the same author, *Osobennosti rabstva v drevney Indii*, 'Features of Slavery in Ancient India', "Vestnik drevney istorii", "Bulletin of Ancient History", 1951, No. 1, *Osnovniye problemy rabstva v drevney Indii*, 'Basic Problems of Slavery in Ancient India',—"Istoriya i kultura drevney Indii" "History and Culture of Ancient India", G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Predisloviye k knige D. R. Chanany "Rabstvo v drevney Indii"*, Foreword to D. R. Chanana's "Slavery in Ancient India"; E. N. Medvedev, *K voprosu o sotsialno-ekonomicheskom stroye drevney Indii*, 'On the Socio-Economic System of Ancient India',—"Narody Azii i Afriki", "Peoples of Asia and Africa", 1966, No. 6, pp. 65-77; G. F. Ilyin, *Klassovy Kharakter drevneindiyskogo obshchestva*, 'Class Character of the Ancient Indian Society'.

<sup>42</sup> "The general and the particular...", E. M. Medvedev; *K voprosu...*, by the same author. *Feodálniye otnosheniya v drevney i srednevekovy Indii*, 'Feudal Relations in Ancient and Medieval India', "Narody Azii i Afriki", "Peoples of Asia and Africa", 1970, No. 3.

<sup>43</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, p. 334.



<sup>44</sup> Interesting data on slaves, donation of these and the use of slave-labour in agriculture are found in the Srautasūtras; for more detail, see: R. S. Sharma, *Sūtras...*, p. 46.

<sup>45</sup> *Maj.-N.II.149*; See also *Pap. III.409*. The term *dāsa* was often used to denote various categories of slaves including those who had fallen into dependence for a fixed period and were actually in temporary service. *Dasyu* denoted status of dependence in general.

<sup>46</sup> *Puriso dāso assa anattādhīno parādhīno na yena kāmaṅgāmo, so aparena samayena tamhā dāsahya mucceyya attādhīno aparādhīno bhujisso yena kāmagāmo*, *Maj. N. I.275*.

<sup>47</sup> *Pap. II.318*.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. in Aristophanes: "For a slave dares not possess his own body; he who has bought us, to him we are entrusted by God".

<sup>49</sup> *Nārada, V.29*.

<sup>50</sup> *J.I.341*; *V.223*; *Gautama, XXVIII.13*. Cf. in Aristotle: "A slave is a certain animate object of property", *Polity, I.4.2*.

<sup>51</sup> Buddhist sources mention prices of slaves, men and women: *J.I.299*—of slave woman, 100 *kāṣāpaṇas*, *III.343*—a Brāhman saved 700 *kāṣāpaṇas* for the purchase of slaves, *VI.577*—1,000 *kāṣāpaṇas* for a king's slave. Jaina texts tell of slave women brought from other countries. They were dressed in their traditional dress, *J. Jain, Life...*, The Buddha forbade the lay Buddhists to sell and buy living beings, *Ang.—N.III.208*, but, evidently, such things happened. Buddhaghosa explained that trade in living beings meant selling people (*sattavanijja ti manussa-vikkaya*; *Manorathapurāṇī*). According to the Dharmasūtras, a Brāhman, even pressed by indigence, was prohibited to trade in human beings. The same was set forth by Manu X.86 and by the more recent Yājñavalkya II.36—38. However, the Sūtras allowed Brāhmanas to barter slaves for slaves, *Āpastamba, I.7.20.15*; *Vaśiṣṭha, II.39*; *Gautama, VII.16*.

<sup>52</sup> *J., No. 92*; cf. *Arth. I.21*.

<sup>53</sup> *Cullavaṃsa, VI.4.2*.

<sup>54</sup> *J.II.428*; *III.101*; *V.105*; *VI.117*.

<sup>55</sup> The number of slaves in ancient India is a subject of scholarly discussion; for more detail, see: G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, pp. 351—352. In this connection, Dharmapāla's commentary on the *Theragāthā* No. 55 may be cited, which tells of a slave-woman from Vārāṇasī as the principal slave among 500 others: *Vārāṇasīyaṃ pañcamaṇaṃ dāsīsatanam jetṭhaka, Paramattha Dīpanī Theragāthā-Āṭṭhakathā*, vol. I, London, 1946, p. 140.

<sup>56</sup> *Maj.-N.I.344*; *I.125—126*.

<sup>57</sup> *J.I.451*.

<sup>58</sup> *J.I.451, 458*.

<sup>59</sup> For more detail, see: A. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy...*, vol. II, pp. 416—417.

<sup>60</sup> See: Y. Bongert, *Reflexions...*, p. 161.

<sup>61</sup> *karamarāṇito*—lit. "he who had to die from the hand of an enemy". Buddhaghosa explains the origin of this kind of slaves, "If a free man has been brought from a foreign country after its capture, or if in his own country some insurgent village has been sacked, on the king's order and people have been brought from there, they are all slaves, be they men or women", *Sam. III.1000*.

<sup>62</sup> See: L. Gopal, *The Economic Life...*, p. 78.

<sup>63</sup> *J.VI.285*.

<sup>64</sup> *J.I.200*; *IV.22.99*; *VI.545—548*. D. Chanana believed that at an earlier stage of social development in India there existed two types of slaves: prisoners of war, i.e., persons brought from another region and those made slaves for debts, because of a famine, etc. (D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*, p. 101).

<sup>65</sup> Jaina texts mention six kinds: born in the house, purchased, debtors, who had enslaved himself out of hunger, enslaved for nonpayment, prisoner of war. See: J. Jain, *Life...*

<sup>66</sup> In this verse seven groups of slaves are listed out; in other *ślokas* (XI.60.62) two more are mentioned.

<sup>67</sup> *Arth. III.13*. The Sāstras often mention these categories of slaves: "slave for food", "slave for a fixed period", "slave given food during a famine".

<sup>68</sup> The *Vinaya-piṭaka, III.15* contains a story of how, having listened to important news brought by a slave-woman, her mistress said, "If you told me the truth, I will set you free" *adaṣī*; lit. "I will make you a non-slave". See also the *Paramattha Dīpanī, Theragāthā-Āṭṭhakathā*, vol. II, p. 220.

<sup>69</sup> For farming those given into slavery, see *J.VI.546*. As for the emancipation of slaves born in the house, purchased or received as a gift inherited, it usually depended entirely on their owner's will; cf. data in *Nārada V. 29* on these four categories of slaves for life.

<sup>70</sup> For more detail, see: U. N. Ghoshal, *Studies...*, pp. 471—478.

## STRUCTURE OF ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

<sup>71</sup> *udara dāsa*. Shamashastry translated "boru-slave". Chanana proposes to translate it as "stomach-slave", i.e., a person willing to become another's slave for food. The latter seems a more happy interpretation for the chapter deals mainly with temporary slaves, and the former groups were slaves for livelihood. Kangle is of the same opinion. Kangle, II, p. 258.

<sup>72</sup> 250, 500 and 1,000 *panas*.

<sup>73</sup> Restrictions of the possibility of enslaving members of the higher *varṇas* are also mentioned in other *Sāstras*; see: G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, pp. 561-562. More recent *Sāstras* advance a thesis on the protection of the interests of the higher *varṇas*, primarily Brāhmins. The *Sāstras* set forth a rule in accordance with which only a member of the same or lower *varṇa* can be made to work off a debt; see: *Manu*, VIII.177; *Nārada*, V.99; *Yājñavalkya*, II.186. Kātyāyana declares that the status of slavery affects only the three lower *varṇas* but not the Brāhmins. In his opinion, even a member of the Brāhmanic *varṇa* is not entitled to make another Brāhman do slave work. If a Brāhman is made a slave, Kātyāyana says, "the king's splendour fades". Thus, unlike the *Arthasāstra*, later *Sāstras* emphasise the principle of *varṇa* membership (U. N. Ghoshal, *Studies ...* p. 473).

<sup>74</sup> See: D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*.

<sup>75</sup> U. N. Ghoshal, *Studies...*, p. 474; S. Chattopadhyaya, *Social Life in Ancient India*. Calcutta, 1965.

<sup>76</sup> According to Medhātithi, the prisoner of war mentioned in the "Manu Laws" VIII.415 is not a Kṣatriya warrior captured in battle, but a slave, who after his master is defeated, becomes the property of the victor, i.e. passes to a new owner; see: L. Gopal, *The Economic Life...*, p. 71. This is a graphic instance of the striving to limit the possibility of enslavement of free people, primarily the "twice-born".

<sup>77</sup> S. Chattopadhyaya, *Social Life...*, pp. 141-143, 149.

<sup>78</sup> *Sam*, II.672-673. In Buddhaghosa: *gaṇādinām dāsa'pi*, *Sam*, III.1001.

<sup>79</sup> J.I.484; III.163; IV.167, 276-277; VI.336.

<sup>80</sup> J., No. 31. In the *Milindapañho* IV. 11.8 we read about slaves in every village; see also *Arth*, II.35; II.15.

<sup>81</sup> See: D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*.

<sup>82</sup> As is known, monks were forbidden to do manual work.

<sup>83</sup> In the course of time the Buddhist community became a big proprietor, on whose land toiled slaves and hired labourers. The Buddha enjoined to return fugitive slaves to their owners, but judging by isolated data of the sources, monasteries sometimes harboured them and made them work. Interesting data on Buddhist monasteries in Ceylon is given in: W. Rahula, *History...*

<sup>84</sup> *Sam*, III.100, 682-683, 1001, 1237-1239. As far back as the *Vinaya* II.248 mention is made of a fact that a king donated 500 *ārāṃikas* in a monastery. They lived near the monastery and worked on its land. There was even a man specially charged to supervise their work; R. S. Sharma, *Sūtras...* p. 46.

<sup>85</sup> *Sam*, III.683. These data resemble the reports in the *Arthasāstra* on the handing over of provisions to slaves and hired labourers.

<sup>86</sup> In the commentary on the *Vinaya* compiled by the Buddhist monk Kassapa, special lists of slaves (*dāsa'panṇa*) and men slaves (*dāsapaṇṇa*) are mentioned, describing the practice of their emancipation in different regions (*janapada*) enumerating royal (*rājadāsa*) and monastery (*viḥāradāsa*) slaves. The commentator notes that one and the same category of them is regarded as belonging to the temple in some countries and to the king, in others: *te hi kalthaci deṣe rājadāsa honti, kalthaci viḥāradāsa*; see: *Vimativinodini Tīkā*, Cf. 373. I avail myself of this occasion to acknowledge the kind help given me by Prof. N. Jayawickrama (Sri Lanka) in my work on this text and other Pali documents.

<sup>87</sup> See: D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>89</sup> See: Y. Y. Tsygankov, Drevneindiysky gorod (po dannym "Arthashastru") *The Ancient Indian City* according to the data of the *Arthasāstra* "Kratkiye soobshcheniya instituta narodov Azii" ["Brief Communications of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia"], 1963, No. 61, pp. 36-37.

<sup>90</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, p. 355.

<sup>91</sup> This is recognised, among others, by G. F. Ilyin; see p. 353.

<sup>92</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Predisloviye...* p. 11; E. M. Medvedev regards this as evidence of the similarity between free and slave-labour (*K voprosu...*, p. 66).

<sup>93</sup> An interesting record is found in Patañjali's grammar III.1.26. Both the slaves and the *karmakāras* together realise that if they work well they will be given rice and clothes and will not be punished by master. In the *Digha nikāya* III.191, the Buddha says that the master

should fulfil his obligations towards his slaves and *karmakāras*, providing them with food and pay (*bhattavettanānuppadānena*), taking care of them when they are ill, etc.

<sup>14</sup> Slaves and *karmakāras* are mentioned together in the inventory of the belongings of a rich *Setṭha* (J.III.129); they are opposed to a vagabond monk J.III.300; they are mentioned as labourers hired by a Brāhman to guard the fields, J.IV.277. See also in Patañjali:—*dāsakarmakāra*. B. N. Puri, *India in the Time of Patañjali*, p. 110; *Theragāthā*, 340; Ang-N.III.75. Buddhist sources mention the use of the labour of these categories of workers by members of various *varṇas*—Brāhmanas J.IV.15; *Maj-N.II.186*; Kṣatriyas (J.V.413) Vaiśyas (*gahapati*, *setṭhi*); VP, I, 243; II.154.

<sup>15</sup> See also: *Arth.* II.25.

<sup>16</sup> See: R. S. Sharma, *Sūdras* .. p. 181.

<sup>17</sup> See: L. Gopal, *The Economic Life* .., p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> *Arth.* II.15; II.24.

<sup>19</sup> G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, pp. 341-342.

<sup>20</sup> See: D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*. Sometimes *peṣsa* is interpreted simply as *pesanākārakā*.

<sup>21</sup> See also: *Sam.N.* I.76.

<sup>22</sup> See: L. Gopal, *The Economic Life*...., p. 78.

<sup>23</sup> See: D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*. The *Vinayapiṭaka* III.161 says that slaves and *karmakāras* eat the same food:—they received pounded rice with sour skilly.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, A. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, London, 1969, p. 153.

<sup>25</sup> It is curious that in speaking of work done by a house bondswoman (*geha-dāsī*) Buddhaghosa (*Sam.* II.47) mentions field work. In a later text, the *Lekhapaddhati*, the duties of the two bondswomen are listed, which include ploughing, mowing grass, manuring the soil, cleaning water reservoirs, milking cows, tending livestock, etc. See L. Gopal, *The Economic Life*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>26</sup> W. Ruben, *Die Lage der Sklaven* . . ., pp. 88-89; G. F. Ilyin, *Osobennosti rabstva v drevney Indii*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Special importance in housekeeping was attached to fetching water and husking rice. The sources have preserved special terms to designate the bondswomen bringing water in jugs (*kumbha-dāsī*) and husking rice (*vihikoṭṭika-dāsī*). Buddhist texts contain descriptions of their hard work; see: D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*; Slaves cooked food (J.VI.117; *Cullavagga*, IV.4.7; VI.4.1), washed up and cleaned the house. In the *Vinayapiṭaka* III.135 the term *dāsī-bhoga* occurs, which Buddhaghosa interpreted as "field work", "house-cleaning", "water-fetching" (*Sam.* II.47). Slaves were to serve the masters at meals and at bath (J.I.383, I.453).

<sup>29</sup> L. Gopal, *The Economic Life* .., p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> J.II.429, III.162.

<sup>31</sup> One of the *Jātakas* I.484 narrates about a slave woman who was hired to husk rice.

<sup>32</sup> E. M. Medvedev, *K voprosu...*, p. 65. "The chief trait of ancient Indian slavery was its poor development; slavery in India can be defined as patriarchal in the sense in which it is defined by Marx:—intended solely for production providing for self-consumption", G. F. Ilyin, *Osobennosti rabstva v drevney Indii*, pp. 51, 52.

<sup>33</sup> J. I.451; II.428; III.167. Curious data can be cited of a slave appearing as witness in the lawcourt when there were no other reliable witnesses available (*Manu*, VIII.70) even though he was not considered legally qualified.

<sup>34</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, pp. 342-343. The sources often treat slaves as members of their master's family, J.II.428; III.162.

<sup>35</sup> See: K. K. Zelyin, M. K. Trofimova, *Formy zavisimosti v vostochnom Sredizemnomorye v ellinistichesky period*, *Forms of Dependence in the East Mediterranean in the Hellenistic Period*, Moscow, 1969, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> *Ind.* X.9.

<sup>37</sup> *Strabo*, XV.1.54.

<sup>38</sup> Some authors interpreted this report of Megasthenes as a proof of "mildness" of slavery in ancient India (e.g., *CHI*, I. p. 416).

<sup>39</sup> See: D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*. Onesicritus, who had visited India before Megasthenes, noted that absence of slaves was peculiar to that report of the country over which Musikanas... This opinion is quoted by Strabo XV.1.54.

<sup>40</sup> See: J. Bongert, *Reflections* . . ., p. 190.

## STRUCTURE OF ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

<sup>121</sup> See: E. M. Shtaerman, *Antichnoye obshchestvo. Modernizatsiya istorii i istoricheskoye analogii*, "Antique Society. Modernization of History and Historical Analogies".—"Problemy istorii dokapitalisticheskikh obshchestv", "Problems of the History of Pre-capitalist Society", Moscow, 1968.

<sup>122</sup> For more detail, see: E. M. Medvedev, *Karmakara i Bhṛtaka. K probleme formirovaniya nizshikh kast* [Karmakāra and Bhṛtaka. Concerning the Formation of the Lower Castes].—"Kasty v Indii", "Castes in India", pp. 133-149; *Istoriya Indii v sredniye veka*, History of India in the Middle Ages, pp. 45-51, M. Schetelich, "Karmakāra" im Arthasāstra des Kauṭilya. W. Ruben, *Entwicklung . . .*, Bd I, pp. 234-235.

<sup>123</sup> karmakāra, lit. "doing work". Sometimes the term *bhṛtaka* is used (in Pali, *bhaṭṭaka*, "earning an allowance"). Evidently Pāṇini held the two terms to be synonymous, as he denotes the pay given to karmakāras as *bhṛti* (V. S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, p. 236). In *Nārada V.3*, *bhṛtaka* forms a category of karmakāras. In the *Vinaya piṭaka* VI.224 *karmakāra* is explained as *bhataka* and *āhaṭṭaka*, or *bhaṭṭaka* who is *āhataka* (*kammakāro nāma bhaṭṭako āhatako*). Scholars are not unanimous in interpreting the term *āhaṭṭako*. Chauana holds it to be the designation of a man given in pledge (he compares with the sans. *āhṛtaka* from the stem *dhā*, and objects to its correlation with the verb *han*—to beat, to beat up). R. S. Sharma links it with the word *āhṛta* "taken," "brought," "captured"; in his views, its comparison with *āhṛtaka* is incorrect from the standpoint of grammar ("pawned"). He believes that the situation of *bhṛtukas* was better than that of karmakāras (R. S. Sharma, *Sūtras . . .*, pp. 97-98).

<sup>124</sup> R. S. Sharma, *Sūtras . . .*, p. 147.

<sup>125</sup> One of the *Jātakas* IV.277 mentions *karmakāras* guarding the fields of a Brāhman. A farming estate where *karmakāras* worked along with slaves is mentioned in the *Suttanipāta* (I.4) and in Buddhaghosa's commentary *Sam.* I.171; an animal farm, in the commentary on the *Suttanipāta* I.2; see: *Social and Rural Economy . . .*, Vol. II, pp. 424-425.

<sup>126</sup> *J.* II, 196.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.43.

<sup>128</sup> *Pap.* III.8.

<sup>129</sup> In the Sanskrit inscriptions of Ceylon the labourers hired at monastery farms were called karmakāras.

<sup>130</sup> *Arth.* II.23.

<sup>131</sup> *J.* IV.38.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.15; I.239.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, III.129.

<sup>134</sup> E. M. Medvedev, *Karmakāra . . .*, p. 134.

<sup>135</sup> This is the opinion of G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, p. 268; by the same author, *Osnovniye problemy sotsialnoi istorii drevney Indii*, "Basic Problems of the Social History of Ancient India", abstract of thesis for the degree of Doctor. Moscow, 1970, p. 23.

<sup>136</sup> According to A. M. Osipov, "the village community remained the basis of the economic structure of India" (A. M. Osipov, *Kratky ocherk . . .*, p. 54). See also: Y. I. Semyonov, *Kategoriya obshchestvenno-ekonomicheskoy układ i ego znachenie dlya filosofskoy i istoricheskoy nauk*, The Category of "Socio-economic Structure" and its Significance for Philosophical and Historical Sciences.—"Filosofskiye nauki", "Philosophical Sciences", 1964, No. 3, p. 27.

<sup>137</sup> V. N. Nikiforov admits that "the principal producers in ancient society were agricultural community members", and proposes to introduce the term "communal slave-owning system" for convenience's sake. He adds that this does not mean that a new formation is introduced or some formation is abolished, but is just an attempt at desisting "from the vulgar interpretation of the slave-owning society quite current until recently". *Obshcheye i osobennoye . . .*, p. 32.

According to L. S. Pereiomov, in ancient China, in the 4th cent. B.C-1st cent. A.D., "the producers of material wealth in the principal branch of labour—agriculture—were the free community members, free tenants and hired labourers", *ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>138</sup> It is hard to agree with Y. I. Semyonov, who argues that in ancient Orient the communal structure (petty autonomous natural economy) was part of the feudal socio-economic structure and that the petty independent producers were under a feudal dependence; Y. I. Semyonov, *Problema . . .*, p. 84.

<sup>139</sup> K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 79.

<sup>140</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *Werke*, Berlin, 1962, B. 21, S. 338. "In asiatischen und klassischen Altertum war die herrschende Form der Klassenzusammenfassung die Sklaverei".

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 792.

- <sup>143</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1965, V. 9, p. 445.
- <sup>144</sup> K. Marx, F. Engels, *Werke*, Berlin, 1965, B. 20, S. 383: "Eshalten auch die Verhältnisse einen leudalen Ausdruck, die dem Wesen des Feudalismus fernstehen".
- <sup>145</sup> See: E. M. Medvedev, *K voprosu...*, pp. 65-77.
- <sup>146</sup> See: A. M. Osipov, *Kratky ocherk...*, pp. 53, 54, 67; *Istoriya Indii v sredniye veka*, "History of India in the Middle Ages", p. 37.
- <sup>147</sup> Pran Nath, *A Study of the Economic Conditions of Ancient India*, London, 1929.
- <sup>148</sup> For more detail, see: I. Gopal, *On Feudal Polity...*, pp. 405-413; by the same author, *On Some Problems of Feudalism in Ancient India*,—*ABORI*, 1963, vol. XLIV, pp. 1-32.
- <sup>149</sup> *Vsemirnaya Istoriya*, "World History", v. II, Moscow, 1956. This idea is also advanced in *Istoriya Indii v sredniye veka*, "History of India in the Middle Ages", pp. 8, 11, 52. Of the recent studies by Indian scholars, noteworthy are: R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism...*; S. A. Q. Husaini, *The Economic History...*
- <sup>150</sup> See: G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, pp. 318-321.
- <sup>151</sup> Like the community members who paid taxes to the state, the hired labourers and free tenants cannot be included in the category of feudally dependent peasants.
- <sup>152</sup> *Istoriya Indii v sredniye veka*.
- <sup>153</sup> See: G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, p. 568; R. Choudhary, *Some Historical Aspects of Feudalism in Ancient India*,—*JIH*, 1959, vol. 37, pt. 2, p. 387.
- <sup>154</sup> *Ib.*
- <sup>155</sup> The sources sometimes emphasise that only some categories of Brāhmaṇas (in particular, *śrotriya*s) were exempted from taxes. See: D. N. Jha, *Revenue System...*, p. 126-127. U. N. Ghoshal, *Contribution...*, pp. 136-141.
- <sup>156</sup> R. S. Sharma, *Aspects...*, p. 137; D. N. Jha, *Revenue System...*, p. 127.
- <sup>157</sup> L. Gopal, *Ownership...*, p. 256.
- <sup>158</sup> Prior to the beginning of the Gupta epoch, the epigraphy contains no data relating to the bestowal of land with tax immunity: (D. N. Jha, *Revenue System...*, p. 128).
- <sup>159</sup> R. S. Sharma, *Feudalism...*, p. 4. Judging from Buddhaghosa's commentary, in the 5th cent. *brahmadeya* implied investiture with certain judicial and administrative rights: S. A. Q. Husaini, *The Economic History...*, p. 166; U. N. Ghoshal, *Contribution...*
- <sup>160</sup> For more detail, see: E. M. Medvedev, *Evolutsiya formy indiyshikh dlarstvennykh gramot*, "Evolution of the Form of Indian Bestowal Settlements".
- <sup>161</sup> According to the commentator Kullukabhaṭṭa, a *kula* was the size of a land plot that could be ploughed by two teams of oxen. In the commentary on the *Arthaśāstra*, "Nīlīnī", a *kula* is interpreted as a plot that can be ploughed by one, two or three ploughs. According to this commentary, the smallest village had 100 such plots and the biggest one, 500; Kangle, II, p. 62.
- <sup>162</sup> L. Gopal, *On Feudal Polity...*, p. 407.
- <sup>163</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, p. 569. E. M. Medvedev supposes that simultaneously the right to the exploitation of the holders of the land plots was conveyed: *K voprosu...*, p. 72, but this is not confirmed by evidence pertaining to the period under discussion.
- <sup>164</sup> O zapisyakh Karla Marksa, sdelaynykh im pri izuchenii knigi M. Kovalevskogo "Obshchinnoye zemlevladieniye, prichiny, khod i posledstviya yego razlozheniya." On Notes made by Karl Marx in studying the book by M. Kovalevsky: "Communal land Tenure, Causes, Course and Consequences of Its Decay", "Sovetskoye vostokovedeniye", "Soviet Oriental Studies", 1958, No. 2.
- <sup>165</sup> E. M. Medvedev, *K voprosu...*, p. 71; G. F. Ilyin, in *Drevnyaya Indiya*, pp. 569-570.
- <sup>166</sup> Kangle relies upon the data of the commentary on the *Jayamaṅgalā* in which abhīrūpadāyādakāni is explained as follows: "Of which sons, grandsons, etc. endowed with learning and character are to own and which are not to revert to the king", Kangle, II, p. 63.
- <sup>167</sup> Service grants were known in a very early period, long before the Mauryan epoch, and as G. F. Ilyin justly noted, they were evidence of a poor development of monetary relations: G. F. Ilyin, *Osnovniye Problemy sotsialnoi istorii drevney Indii*, p. 7.
- <sup>168</sup> G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, p. 568.
- <sup>169</sup> Tenancy relations in ancient India including the Mauryan age were fairly well-developed, but they became particularly so in the first centuries A.D. This question deserves special investigation.
- <sup>170</sup> See: G. M. Bongard-Levin, G. F. Ilyin, *Drevnyaya Indiya*, p. 519.

## STRUCTURE OF ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

<sup>170</sup> Cf. M. V. Kryukov, *Sotsialnaya differentsiatsiya v drevnem Kitaye (opyt sravnitel'no-istoricheskoi kharakteristiki)*, "Social Differentiation in Ancient China: Essay of Comparative-Historical Characterisation",—"*Razlozhenie rodovogo stroya i formirovaniye klassovogo obshchestva*", "The Decay of the Tribal System and the Formation of the Class Society", Moscow, 1968, p. 249.

<sup>171</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, v. I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1963, p. 410.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*



# The Development of the Town in Ancient India

WALTER RUBEN

THE Indian town is analysed here in a very abstract sense without differentiating between the concrete towns in the different regions of the Indian subcontinent. Ancient India is in this paper precapitalist Indian class society from about 3000 B.C. up to about 1800 A.D. It belonged to the first or ancient-oriental class society which began with the Sumerians. In India it existed first in the form of the Indus-society of the third millennium B.C. and then in the form of the Gangā-society from 900 B.C. up to the 19th century A.D. This one had like all societies three main periods, those of evolution, of perfection and decay, the first up to the Nandas, the second up to the Guptas, their golden age being its climax, and the third up to colonialism. This third period of mediaeval India was similar to European feudalism, but the European development was different; only there developed the antique, feudal, capitalist and socialist societies. This periodisation is, of course, very controversial.

The town in the Indus-civilization was to a certain extent similar to the contemporaneous Sumerian town. Both were interconnected by the world-trade of these times by sea and land and had according to some historians a common origin. This town was certainly the center of government and of trade. This trade was based on commodity production. In this way the well-known continuity of Indian society and culture began 5000 years ago. This conception of continuity of which conservative Indians are proud (in contrast to progressive Indians who stress the progress of all kinds during these millennia) means the so-called stagnation of old Indian society. But in reality only the base of the society was stagnating, especially the village community, and not even this absolutely because together with this basic stagnation one observes some developments even in the Indian village and town. The Indus town decayed after 2000 B.C.

About 600 B.C. a new town began in the Gangā region and we do not yet



know whether or how this beginning was connected with the decay of the older town. The plan of both towns was in some regard similar. From about 900 B.C. onwards, Āryan kings with their followers, no more with their tribes, had conquered the Gangā-region and the Mundā and Dravida tribes there living. These Nonāryans became the bulk of the śudra varṇa while the Āryans understood themselves as Vaiśyas, Kṣatriyas and Brahmins. This class-society is here called the Gangā-society. It needed the organisation of a state which got the form of despotism, a monarchy the ruler of which was not responsible to any social institution legally. His palace became the center of the new town which was a fort with the king's palace, administration, meeting place (sabha), garrison, treasure-house and arsenal. But this new town from the very beginning must have been also a center of trade.

The more the Āryans, coming from the Indus about 900 B.C., conquered the eastern region it became all the more important for them to get at least Soma, salt and horses from the Punjab. Without salt one cannot live, especially in a hot climate. Without Soma there was no Vedic ritual and without horses supremacy of the Āryans was impossible. Thus there must have existed a great deal of trading over an enormous distance and a trade-road. Presumably the goods were carried by pack oxen and/or bullock carts. Who the traders have been is not yet known. But in a Vedic ritual (agniṣṭoma) there was some ritual play in which an adhvaryu bought some Soma from a trader not for a cow but for gold; the priest at the end took the gold back by force and drove the lamenting trader away. The trader is called a śūdra. As such he was a non-Āryan, whose role was performed in the play by a Kautsa or another Brahmin. In later times the great merchants on this East-West road were Vaiśyas, but we cannot yet fix the date when before or about 600 B.C. this important social change took place, when few of the late-Vedic Vaiśya herdsmen-agriculturists became town-dwelling merchants, when coins took the place of cows or gold and when this important road connected the Gangā-plain not only with the Punjab but also with Bactria and in this way connected the Āryans in the east with the famous silk-road from Mediterranean via Bactria to China. It seems that already the Medes of Iran in the 7th century B.C. had bought silk from China, long before Kauṭilya mentioned Chinese silk.

While towns in the Gangā-region began about 600 B.C. according to archaeology, texts of the period from 600 up to 325 B.C. mention a lot of commodities, metals, wool, salt, hides and others. These testify barter of such goods and payment with gold and different coins. Coins are mentioned by Pāṇini in the 5th century and some believe that this old Indian coinage is to be derived from the Lydian one which had originated in the 7th century, although the Indian punch-marked coins had a character of their own.

It is certain that the Indus-town had trade-connection with Sumer by land via Afghanistan and by sea along the Persian Gulf. These trade-routes retained their importance for the Gangā-towns later on. And inside India besides the great East-West-trunk-road, there was trade by rivers and there were other trade roads from North to South, described in Buddhist texts. Kauṭilya rejects the opinion of his predecessors (the "teachers" of Arthasāstra in the Nanda-period) who had preferred water-routes in contrast to him who preferred land-routes, especially the Southern ones, in contrast to the teachers, who had been in favour of the Northern ones. This discussion shows some progress in trade during this time of the Nanda-Mauryas, which may be characterised as the first climax of Ancient Indian civilization before the Golden age of the Guptas.

Such trade-routes were so important that they influenced foreign policy. The Nandas conquered Northern India following probably the great East-West-road, and Aśoka followed the Southern trade-roads with the intention of developing these North-South-communications. The despots had to secure peace for developing trade in a region as much as possible, because without a grand-scale trade over great distances, social life, especially that of the rich people was no more possible. Peace (yogakṣema) and exchange of goods by trade in a single kingdom like Magadha were no more sufficient, the whole of India, as far as Hindu civilization had spread, had to be pacified and united in the interest of the despot, not only for the Chakravarti of the Nanda and Maurya dynasties, but also for the high officials, Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, rich merchants in the great towns, the nāgaraka. Alexandros of Makedonia followed in Persia, it seems, the silk-road up to Bactria and then in the Punjab the West-East-road up to the frontier of the Nanda empire. Under the Seleukids the earlier communications of the Near East with the Mauryas in the Gangā-region were still alive, and the Roman empire followed the same trade-politics, so that a little later the Roman, the Kushān and the Chinese empires met in Bactria in peace and war. Thus, the Gangā-society came into contact with Rome and China (also by sea!) and Indian traders exported Indian goods for gold from both sides. So wonderful was Indian commodity production, so efficient were Indian handicrafts! This went on up to the Gupta period. The conquests by the white Huns, Turcs and Mongols from time to time did great damage to the trade along the silk-route and the Indian trade roads. But from the year  $\pm 1$  on, the monsoon had been discovered and the trade by sea from Africa and the Near East to India and from India via Indonesia to China flourished during the Middle Ages up to the time when Portugeeses came to India via Africa and finally Indian colonialism and capitalism began.

Thus, there is no doubt, that the old trade and old Indian trade-town

flourished through all these centuries. There were several ups-and-downs, certainly, but "the" Indian town as a place of commodity production and trade, nay even world-trade remained alive at least through the whole tenure of the Gangā-society.

In the same time the village community went on living with no or little commodity-production. On the Indian subcontinent there was an enormous mass of villages but only a small number of such great trade-towns. Most of the villages were so far away from the next town that they had no or only very little connection with it, i.e., with the center of government and trade of the respective state. Especially in the rainy season most villages were cut off from the outer world and had therefore to be autarch, and because they were so, they stagnated. But around the towns, some villages had some exchanges with the towns. The town had to be fed by some surrounding villages and there were some few towns with 100,000 inhabitants, although the estimates of archaeologists differ on this point. On the other hand it cannot yet be proved that products of handicrafts of the town were sold in the village. The village was not the inner market of the town, as it seems. As far as interpretation of texts goes, the village sold food, cotton, grass etc. to townspeople against gold (or money, *hiraṇya*), not against commodities of the town, and this gold was used in the village in part as tax, in part it may have been manufactured into ornaments for the women by goldsmiths in the town, or hoarded in other ways for times of starvation, but it was not invested in agriculture or village handicrafts.

Thus, in contrast to the village with its "Asiatic" mode of production there was another mode of production in the town, that of commodity production, but this was not the dominant mode. Both commodity production and trade were private as well as controlled by the state. Some well-to-do merchants as well as the despot organised handicrafts for commodity production, the merchant for sale in his town and in far away countries (towns), the despot for his own life of luxury, for his soldiers and officials and also for trade, selling some goods in part in competition with private trade, claiming to protect in this way his people against avaricious merchants, but on the other hand building roads and helping the private merchant with his political power. The state regarded some productions as its monopoly, especially that of all kinds of metal in mines, of coins, of alcohol, of weapons from metal and wood and other materials, collected in state's "forests of products". The state had also some weavers and other handicrafts at its disposal (not as its monopoly) just as the courtezans. The king declared some forests as his own for protecting, capturing and taming elephants, he had his own land for his herds of cattle, his own branch of agriculture as well in "king's fields" as in great clearings of forests where he settled peasants and herdsmen in

1944

villages which were not quite so independent as the old villages. And when with the new harvest new cereals reached the state's storehouse as taxes the state had to sell the remnants of the old harvest, often in great quantities. Thus, a great and important sector of several kinds of production and distribution belonged to the state, and this sector was relatively progressive in so far as the state trained the respective supervisors in the corresponding techniques, in some kinds of science. The Arthasāstra knew that the political strength of the state depended to a great extent on its economic strength which had in part to be independent from the wealth of private production and trade.

This public sector of production, distribution with its infrastructure is described (or at least recommended) by Kauṭilya, but he hints in some chapters at the corresponding intentions or beginnings already under the Nandas. Between the Mauryas and Moguls there seems to have been no principal, qualitative difference in this regard. It depended on each government, its power and the strength of the private merchants how much interest and success in the state's sector and in the private one was. What the oldest despots like Janaka of Videha or Pratardana of Kāśī (as described in the oldest Upanishads), what the despots of the Śiśunāga-dynasty before the Nandas did in this regard, is not yet sufficiently known. One might e.g. assume that the state's monopoly of elephants and their forests was as old as elephants used by Indians and unrestricted clearing of the jungle became dangerous for their existence.

The private sector of production and trade in town and village also is fairly well-known from Kauṭilya's text. Merchants organised craftsmen by trusting them with the raw-material and receiving the product while the artisans used their own implements in their own workshops and were paid for their labour only. But there seems to have been also some great artisans who sold their own products on the market and were fairly rich. Some craftsmen seem to have lived and worked in some thing like suburbs or villages close to the town. Potters lived there, where good clay was at hand, carpenters where timber was to be had, and ironsmiths where their workshops were no danger to the wooden houses of towns.

The private agricultural and pastoral production went on in villages of the traditional type, around towns where citizens had their fields, in new villages in the state's clearings, and in villages which paid no rent to the state (akaradagrāma, agrahāra), "given" to learned Brahmins by kings. In these the peasants were "given" together with the soil and had to work for the great family of Brahmins; they were analogous to European feudal serfs.

Finally there existed in India the great sector of pre-Āryan gentile production, to a small extent that of microlithic hunters, but mostly that of

neolithic agriculturists and herdsmen. From this sector the "Asiatic" mode of production had once developed together with class society, first about 3000 and later on about 900 B.C.

Thus, there were four economic sectors which could already be distinguished, the gentile one, the "Asiatic" or "ancient-oriental" one, the private and the state's sector of production. Four sectors can be observed today also in capitalist India: (1) remnants of the gentile production, (2) the mass of 500000 villages, (3) private and (4) state's production in a small number of towns with concentrated industry. This picture of Indian economic development looks quite peculiar and it would be important to compare and contrast this Indian development not only with that in Europe but also with that in a country as vast as China or as small as Egypt during the same 3000 or 5000 years. This would help to demonstrate the uniqueness of India and her belonging to the "ancient-oriental" class-society as well.

On this very complicated economic base with its corresponding material culture the equally complicated structure of old Indian mental culture was built. The magico-mythological culture of the pre-Āryan gentile society is fairly well-known from the material which has been collected by cultural anthropologists during the last decades, but its historical background is still hypothetical. Of the material and mental cultural life of the Indian villagers we do not know enough. When old tales of all types, even the old epics and dramas believe in a happy end, in the victory of the good man in his lifetime, and when mokṣa and karman-saṃsāra play no great role in this literature, scholars mostly call this "popular" optimism without defining what by "people" is meant. But even so, this conception may be right, the villagers might have believed mostly in magic and in mythology especially of the grāmadevatās which had developed from gentile pre-Āryan superstition.

The material and mental culture of the despot and his circles in his town is fairly well-known, the luxurious life, the despotic mentality linked with orthodox or with, sometimes, heterodox religion, but he did not generally follow the moral teachings of Brahmanical dharma or Buddhist or Jainist vinaya, but he was in the eyes of his subjects given to pleasure, avarice if not war (kāma, artha, hiṃsā). On the other hand there were some educated and moral men among the despots like Janaka of Videha, Candragupta and Aśoka Maurya, Candragupta Gupta, Harṣa and Akbar.

One of the great problems of the history of ancient Indian culture is what the Indians called the nāgaraka and his culture. He developed his culture slowly together with his town, private commodity production and trade. He was to a great extent a rich and highly educated merchant. He developed in the town the luxurious and refined type of society which is

characterised by the courtesan and which is described in the *Kāmasūtra* which belongs probably to the Kushāna period. These foreign rulers had accepted some Hellenistic-Iranian-Bactrian culture on their way from Central Asia to India, and they were to a certain degree antibrahmanical because they found no satisfactory social place in the orthodox varṇa-system. They helped therefore to develop the "enlightened", unorthodox mentality of the nāgaraka. From their time on, script was used for literature. Fiction of authors like Aśvaghoṣa was written in contrast to folk literature, was composed by poets, by personalities, for few educated people and preserved in their original form for the following generations of nāgarakas. It seems that some centuries before the Kushānas the sophisticated kāvya-literature had begun, at least from the time of Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* on. The highly artificial kāvya genre of poetry was prepared with the help of grammar, lexicography, metrics, dramaturgy and poetics. The nāgaraka needed a highly developed literature and the ādikavi Vālmiki may have written his form of the *Rāmāyaṇa* between Patañjali and Aśvaghoṣa. This form of the epic developed during the following centuries up to the Gupta period when the archetype of its existing manuscripts was written.

This development of poetry cannot be separated from that of music, dance, abhinaya and sculpture as well as painting. All arts strove to express the same rasas. The nāgaraka needed the pleasure which all the arts could give and he needed courtesans who were trained in the arts. According to the *Kāmasūtra* the difference of the four varṇas was not important for being a nāgaraka, he needed wealth, in whatever way he might have got it. Even some Śūdras might have entered this refined society. In the town lived the intelligentsia, developing economics, politics, law, morals, religion, arts; sciences, humanities, theology and philosophy. These men, mostly Brahmins, were the precapitalist forerunners of actual India's intelligentsia which comes from the middle classes. Śūdraka in his drama describes some merchants, courtesans and their viṭas or the nāgarakas of Ujjayinī.

The development of Mahāyāna-Buddhism may be connected with that of the nāgaraka, as Buddhism and Jainism from the very beginning in the sixth century flourished in towns. But neither sciences nor humanities or philosophy are mentioned among the kalās of the ganikā in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* or in the *Kāmasūtra*. On the other hand, atomism had been taught by Jainas, perhaps centuries before Vaiśeṣika was founded some time after the grammarian Patañjali. For a European with his Greek heritage it is difficult to understand that Indian philosophy should have begun in villages, that a hylozoist like Uddālaka Āruṇi in the *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* thought and taught about 600 B.C. in a village, only seldom visiting a king-philosopher in his town, which just at that time began to develop. The

same holds good for logic and theory of knowledge in Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Sautrāntika-Yogācāra with the materialistic criterion of practice, for the first time formulated by Vātsyāyana in the opening of his Nyāyabhāṣya in the Gupta period. Did all these philosophers, including the Cārvākas belong to the nāgarakas?

However that may have been, indology cannot overlook the astonishing similarities between the Indian society of the nāgaraka with his courtesan and its Greek analogy in the Greek town, between the Gupta age and the classical period of Perikles with the great dramatists and sophists, with Anaxagoras and Sokrates, followed by Demokritos and Plato, with Herodotos and Thukydides. Greek antiquity and the Gangā-society began both at about 900 B.C., but the Indian development was slow on behalf of the "Asiatic" or "ancient-oriental" mode of production, prevailing in the relative stagnation of the Indian village community. But inside this dominant mode of production, in some towns with their private and state's commodity production developed something similar to the Greek town, not identical. India used no slaves of the Greek type in production. Here one must keep in mind, that dāsa means not only slave but also some kinds of indebted and dependent workers who could become free by their own work, in contrast to the real, the Greek slave. Thus the dominant production by slaves in Greece did not develop in India. But some kind of commodity production did, although it did not become dominant in India as it did in Greece. The similarity of commodity production and trade, private and state's own sufficed for the development of the two variants of one type of rich and educated merchants who wanted to enjoy life, one in Greek town-republics and slave-holder democracy, the other in Indian towns of despots or gaṇas. Both societies began in the same century in two quite different regions, in the Indian subcontinent and in the Mediterranean region. Both were far away from each other and for centuries without direct connection by trade or war. Between both lay the vast region of the Near East through which since Sumerian times caravans found their ways. Already between Crete and Harappa there may have been some communication, certainly no direct one, and in the decisive period between 900 and 450 B.C., the time of Perikles, the Greeks knew almost nothing of India and vice versa.

On account of the enormous space of the Indian subcontinent and its history and relative stagnating "Asiatic" mode of production India developed so much slower than Greece with her highly developed slave-oriented production that India reached the climax only with the Guptas (300-500 A.D.) while Athens had her classical period already about 450 B.C. under Perikles. The Gupta age went on for 200 years at least, the Periklean age only for some 50 years. These 1400 years of the Gangā-society between 900 B.C. and



## DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN

500 A.D. correspond to the Greek and Roman varieties of antiquity together. Towns went on in feudal Europe especially in Byzantia, Italy and Gallia, but this continuity had not the same quality as the continuity of India and her towns. India had not the same feudal formation of society as Europe and developed therefore no capitalism out of her ancient-oriental society. But in the middle ages India had some similarities with feudal Europe as she had before with Greek antiquity and before that with ancient-oriental Sumer. In this way the continuity of the Gangā-society and the Indian town with the nāgaraka culture can be sketched for further discussion.

*Note:* The material on which this paper is based can be found in the six volumes of my "Die Gesellschaftliche Entwicklung im alten Indien", Berlin (GDR), 1967-1973.





# Sources of Indian Idealism

DEBIPRASAD CHATTOPADHYAYA

IN an important sense the perennial source of Indian idealism is a trend of speculation recorded in the Upaniṣads. It is by no means the only trend of Upaniṣadic thinking, as Śaṅkara and his followers wanted to believe. But already in the Upaniṣads it is more or less the predominant trend and has the potential of developing into a very influential philosophy of later times.

## 1. UPANIṢAD OR VEDA-END

The Upaniṣads are traditionally viewed as the final portions of the Veda. The word *veda* means knowledge, though to the followers of Vedic orthodoxy it means the most infallible knowledge which has been directly revealed. Concretely the name stands for the literary product of those people who called themselves Aryans and who, it is usually assumed, migrated into northern India as pastoral nomadic tribes, without the art of writing but with considerable literary gifts combined with skill in warfare. How they gradually lost their racial identity while spreading over India, settled down and moved from barbarism to civilization is a story that will interest us mainly in so far as it throws light on their ideological development.

The earlier portions of this literature consist of songs, charms and hymns. These were orally composed and transmitted to later generation by means of an amazingly meticulous retentive memory—a circumstance that accounts for their name *śruti*, 'that which is heard'. To us these come down in the form of enormous compilations (*saṃhitā*), a form traceable to considerable antiquity. Of these compilations, the earliest and regarded as fundamental is the *Rgveda*. There are in addition three others—the *Sāmaveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Atharvaveda*.

The *Rgveda* alone contains 1,028 songs in a total of 10,552 verses. Their total composition must have taken a long period of time. For modern scholars, its inner chronology is naturally a formidable problem, which they are still groping to solve. This much is certain that some of these songs are considerably earlier than others. Any hasty generalization about the early

Vedic people based on some stray Rgvedic evidence is liable to be fallacious.

The early songs of the *Rgveda*, which often surprise us by their primitive vigour and uninhibited imagination, are almost totally obsessed with the problems of physical survival. These express, so to say, without cessation, the desire for food, cattle, progeny, victory, and so on. All this is mixed up with the mythological imaginings of a people, who see deities in many things that they do not understand and which fill them with awe normally passing into reverence. For instance, they see such deities in natural phenomena like the sun and wind, fire and forest, in the extraordinary might of their war chiefs or heroes, in the intoxicating power of their drink *soma*, and so on. The deities are important for them, because they are supposed to be aids to the fulfilment of elemental desires. As people with a rudimentary control over nature, the poets see deities even in their frankly pathetic wish-fulfilments like those of the prevention of abortion and the cure of pthisis.

People at such a stage of development are not expected to philosophise, and the fact is that the genuinely earlier songs of the *Rgveda* show no predilection for philosophy. Except for some admittedly later songs in this vast collection, speculations even in a proto-philosophical sense do not have any place in the *Rgveda*, notwithstanding all the wild things often said about the great wisdom contained in it. As H. P. Sastri<sup>1</sup> says, such statements are inspired more by an ignorant veneration for the Veda than an actual acquaintance with its contents.

The next phase of Vedic literary activity can be traced to the *Yajurveda*. This reaches its climax in colossal texts called the *Brāhmaṇas*. These texts are characterised by a shift of interest to discussion of the rituals or *Yajña*. The rituals must have originally been something like the magical rites still to be observed among some primitive peoples, surviving in certain pockets of the modern world even today. In their original primitive context, magical rites are not irrelevant. Their essence consists mainly in enacting "in fantasy the fulfilment of the desired reality. That is magic, an illusory technique, supplementary to real techniques. But though illusory it is not futile." The ritual performance cannot have any direct effect on nature; but it can and does have an appreciable effect on the performers themselves. Inspired by the belief that it will bring into being the desired reality, they proceed to the task of actually bringing it into being with greater confidence and so with greater energy than before. And so it does have an effect on nature after all. "It changes their subjective attitude to reality, and so indirectly it changes reality."<sup>2</sup>

In this sense of being illusory techniques intended to aid real techniques, magical rites are originally connected with *man's struggle with nature*.

As discussed in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts, however, the rituals are uprooted from their original context and their function passes into its opposite. These become tools for a new technique—that of *man's struggle against man*. The point is too obvious to be missed and Eggeling,<sup>3</sup> in the introduction of his English translation of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, observes:

"The *Brāhmaṇa*-s, it is well known, form our chief, if not our only, source of information regarding one of the most important periods in the social and mental development of India. They represent the intellectual activity of a sacerdotal caste which . . . was ever intent on deepening and extending its hold on the minds of the people, by surrounding its own vocation with the halo of sanctity and divine inspiration. A complicated ceremonial, requiring for its proper observance and consequent efficacy the ministrations of a highly trained priestly class, has ever been one of the most effective means of promoting hierarchical aspirations. Even practical Rome did not entirely succeed in steering clear of the rock of priestly ascendancy attained by such-like means . . . The Roman statesmen submitted to these transparent tricks rather from considerations of political expediency than from religious scruples; and the Greek Polybius might well say that 'the strange and ponderous ceremonial of Roman religion was invented solely on account of the multitude which, as reason had no power over it, required to be ruled by signs and wonders.'"

The change in the content of Vedic literature transforms also its form. In the *Brāhmaṇa* texts, instead of the inspired poetry of the *R̥gveda*, we have only insipid prose—in fact the dullest and the most cumbrous style that we have in Indian literature. One reason for this insipidity is the tendency to evolve symbolic interpretations of ritual trivialities, in the course of which scraps of *R̥gvedic* verses are often quoted without their context and with strange meanings instilled into them.

Such trivialities, though meaningless for us, are not irrelevant, for in terms of these the authors of the *Brāhmaṇa*-s also try to validate a new social norm, that emerges on the ruins of the ancient tribal one. The new norm is that of a split society in which the powers and privileges belong to the kings and nobles, though secondarily also to their ideological apologists—the priests. For the purpose of rationalising it, its essential features are sometimes projected back to ancient Vedic mythology. Thus the group of gods called Maruts are now made to stand for the common people while despotic power is represented by Indra and Varuṇa. Here are only a few examples from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*:

"Varuṇa, doubtless, is the nobility, and the Maruts are the people. He (the priest) thus makes the nobility superior to the people. And hence people here serve the Kṣatriya, placed above them." (ii.5.2.6)

"He muttered that verse addressed to Indra and referring to the Maruts. Indra indeed is the nobility, and the Maruts are the people. 'They shall be controlled', he thought, and therefore that verse is addressed to Indra." (ii.5.2.27)

"Now some, on noticing any straw or piece of wood among the *soma*-plants, throw it away. But let him not do this; for—the *Soma* being the nobility and the other plants the common people, and the people being the nobleman's food—it would be just as if one were to take hold of and pull out some food he has put in his mouth, and throw it away." (iii.3.2.8)

Some ritual details are sought to yield the symbolic interpretation of what "makes the Kṣātra superior to the people. Hence the people here serve, from a lower position, the Kṣatriya above them." (i.3.4.15) Similarly other ritual details are interpreted to show how "the Kṣatriya, whenever he likes, says, 'Hallo Vaiśya, just bring to me what thou hast stored away'. 'Thus he both subdues him and obtains possession of anything he wishes by dint of his very energy.'" (i.3.2.15)

Many more examples like these may easily be quoted. But that is not necessary. What is necessary is only to note that in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts there clearly emerges a new political philosophy largely as a validation of the new social conditions. We shall mention it only in bare outlines, for without this we hardly understand the new philosophy of the Upaniṣads.

The political philosophy is traditionally expressed in terms of the four castes: Kṣatriyas (kings and nobles), Brahmins (priests and the clergy), Vaiśyas (merchants and farmers) and Śūdras. What is meant by the last? The answer is suggested by a simple process of elimination. None of the first three classes is supposed to be responsible for the direct labour of production.<sup>4</sup> Besides, the three classes taken together can constitute no more than a negligible minority of the community visualised. It follows therefore that by the Śūdras the texts can only mean the vast majority of the direct producers. And the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*<sup>5</sup> declares that they are some sort of subhuman beings: they are only to serve the others, they can be thrown out at will and they can be slain at pleasure.

The contempt for manual workers—and therefore for manual labour—is quite clear. The counterpart of this is the exaltation of mental work—of thought, of consciousness, of pure reason. We have in this the clue to Upaniṣadic idealism.

The *Brāhmaṇa* texts are appended to the ancient compilations and to these *Brāhmaṇa*-s is appended another class of literature called the *Āraṇyaka*-s or forest-texts. "These texts comprise everything which was of a secret, uncanny character, and spelled danger to the uninitiated, and

which, for that reason, might only be taught and learnt in the forest, and not in the villages." (Winternitz)

With all that is supposed to be so very mysterious about the *Āraṇyaka-s*—which, incidentally, is nothing but the lingering of the belief in the magical efficacy of their themes or words—the historical importance of these texts consists in their shift of interest to speculations on proto-philosophical questions, howsoever hesitant such a first step to philosophy may be. This tendency becomes all the more prominent in the still later class of literature, the Upaniṣads which, in their turn, are appended to the *Āraṇyaka-s*.

With the Upaniṣads the Vedic literature comes to its end. Hence they are also called Vedānta or Veda-end. The new social conditions, sought to be validated in the *Brāhmaṇa-s* mainly in terms of ritual trivialities, is more stabilised in the Upaniṣadic age. In accordance with the theoretical temper of the age, the new norm of society is given a more philosophical form:

"Verily, in the beginning, this world was *brahma*, one only. Being one, he was not developed. He created still further a superior form, the Kṣātrahood. . . Therefore there is nothing higher than Kṣātra. Therefore at the coronation ritual, the Brahmin sits below the Kṣātriya. Upon Kṣātrahood alone does he confer that honour. The same thing, namely Brahminhood is the source of Kṣātrahood. Therefore even if the king attains supremacy, he rests finally upon Brahminhood. . . He was not yet developed. He created the commonalty (*viś*) . . . He was not yet developed. He created the *sūdra* . . . He was not yet developed. He created still further a better form, Law. This is the power of the Kṣātriya class, namely Law. Therefore there is nothing higher than the Law. So a weak man controls a strong man by Law, just as if by a King. Verily, that which is Law is Truth. Therefore they say of a man who speaks the Truth, 'He speaks the Law', or of a man who speaks the Law, 'He speaks the Truth'. Verily, both these are the same thing." (*Bṛ Up.* i.4.11-14)

Is this a way of saying that philosophy is not unconnected with political power? What the philosophers strive after is truth. But truth is nothing but another way of looking at law. And it is from law that the kings and nobles derive their political power. The ruling ideas of the Upaniṣads are not unconnected with the ruling powers of the Upaniṣadic age.

It is important to see how the later Indian law-givers take up this Upaniṣadic suggestion and want to implement it on the Indian philosophical situation. That gives us some idea of the social function of Indian idealism.\* For the present, we are concerned with the question of its origin.

We shall first describe the general process of the growth of the Upaniṣadic idealism and then pass on to observe it in some detail.

## 2. EMANCIPATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In sheer bulk, the Vedic literature is staggering. It must have taken more than a thousand years for the whole of it to be composed. What is nevertheless remarkable about it is the inner continuity of its development. It thus enables us to see how during a long period the material progress gained by successive generations of Vedic people enabled them to reach a stage at which human labour is capable of producing much more than is necessary for its bare maintenance. A section of the community is thus no longer obliged to maintain itself by its own manual labour. Subsisting, as it then did, on the surplus produced by another section of the community, it found leisure enough to specialise in speculative activity. Their thoughts and ideas, unlike those of their ancestors or the early Vedic poets, were no longer obsessed with the problem of physical survival only. They could move forward to construct a speculative superstructure in its first real sense.

What is gained by all this is undoubtedly of the most momentous significance. It is the realisation and recognition of the power of reason or of the creative role of consciousness. Without the emancipation of consciousness from the almost total preoccupations with the problem of survival, there is no beginning of theoretical activity in its full sense. In the *R̥gveda* we come across poets and seers, who, howsoever inspired they are, are inspired only by the vision of the fulfilment of elemental desires. Their consciousness is engrossed with the problem of the struggle with nature and they do not have the leisure to philosophise. In the vast *Brāhmaṇa* literature we have indeed the glimpse of the emerging leisured class. But it confronts the problem of stabilisation of the political power of the kings and their ideological apologists—with what is called “applied politics, or the practice of controlling men with fear”.<sup>7</sup> The relative emancipation of consciousness of the leisured class is peculiarly consumed by this. The kind of intellectual atmosphere indicated by the texts is not the one in which the philosopher is encouraged to come to the fore. In the *Brāhmaṇa*-s we see priests rambling in the graveyard of primitive rituals; but we do not yet see the philosopher. The picture of the philosopher first emerges in the Upaniṣads, when the leisured class fully stabilises its own power and can afford to have the serenity and tranquillity of unruffled contemplation. The first philosophers of the Upaniṣads raise questions of profound theoretical significance and they earnestly seek answers to these.

At the same time, this progress—great though it is—also creates a very grave crisis for thought, particularly in the view of those that visualise an ideal society in which the manual workers are shorn of all prestige and privileges. The tools and techniques by which nature is interrogated belong

to these direct producers. But they recede to the background, and along with them the growing stock of their experience and understanding. Philosophical activity, in so far as it is cut off from all these, easily tends to lose the spirit of interrogating nature. The result is much worse than a mere contempt for the physical sciences. It is the creation of an illusion, resulting from the coercion of consciousness with a peculiar process of introversion. Knowledge does no longer comprise the knowledge of objects. It wants to be knowledge of the subject itself—of the bare ego or of the pure self. As the Upaniṣadic idealists put it, the ideal of the philosopher is *ātmaratirātmakrīḍa*—‘the libido fixed on the self, sporting with the self’. (*Ch. Up.* VII.25.2) Extreme introversion, we are told,<sup>8</sup> brings into operation a delusion of grandeur. It is the delusion of the omnipotence of the bare ego. ‘This ego, this self, wants to dictate terms to reality and demands to be recognised as the only reality. ‘I am that ultimate reality’—declares the Upaniṣadic idealist. The result is the lofty contempt for the material world, in which the philosopher himself has his being.

All this is putting the point in the terminologies of the psychologist. But that does not mean that we are trying to understand here the psychology of the Upaniṣadic idealists. If we are interested in their mental history, the reason is that it enables us to understand how the new world in which they live accounts for the fundamentals of their new world-outlook. In their political philosophy, active intercourse with nature is no better than the forced labour of the *śūdra*-s. The philosopher, hence, takes pride in disowning the spirit of interrogating nature and is thus under no obligation to admit its reality.

Cut off thus from active intercourse with nature, the philosopher’s consciousness runs the risk of imagining that it can rise to ever higher and ever more remote conditions where only thought remains and the things thought of fade out. This is the cult of pure reason, i.e., of reason only as a faculty of illusion. Consciousness, estranged from concrete living, becomes a form of sick consciousness. It is no longer *consciousness of something* but *something like consciousness-in-itself*—just consciousness, sheer consciousness—not the consciousness of the real men and women engaged in the active intercourse with nature and getting progressively enriched by this intercourse. Consciousness is now viewed as a “deified absolute”—too mysterious to be grasped by mundane thought and too awesome to be described by ordinary language.

Not that the emancipation of consciousness has such a necessary fate. There are thinkers in Upaniṣadic India who do not share this line of thinking. There are even those who, instead of taking a deified view of consciousness, want to understand it in the sober scientific sense.<sup>9</sup> In all presumption,



they are the pioneers of the scientific tradition in Indian philosophy. Their consciousness does not develop into the morbid consciousness of their idealist colleagues.

In Upaniṣadic India, however, their prestige is already on the decline and there is a growing contempt for whatever was evaluated as the positive science of the age.<sup>10</sup> In the new intellectual atmosphere, those whose glory is specially boosted are philosophers for whom consciousness, fully alienated from actual life, wants to oppose and undermine life.

Such a philosopher is the great Yājñavalkya. He declares that reality is just a mass of consciousness (*viññānaghana*). It can neither be grasped by the normal organs of knowledge nor described in normal language. The only way of talking about it is to say, 'It is not this', 'It is not this'. While dreaming and further falling into the state of dreamless sleep, one gets progressively emancipated from the fetters of the material world, and has a taste of this reality.

This is how the idealist outlook is first foreshadowed in Indian philosophy. But, as we shall presently see, it could hardly make any sense to the early Vedic poets, not merely because they were comparatively ignorant and did not know how to philosophise but because they were much too committed to the active intercourse with nature to afford such gambols of pure consciousness.

Thus for the understanding of the general history of ideological development, Vedic literature has great importance. It is a vast literature with an inner continuity of development, showing speculative consciousness not only in its making, but also in its eventual culmination in the cult of pure consciousness, the outcome of which is the idealist outlook.

An adequate survey of Vedic literature from this point of view forms the subject of an independent study. We have the scope here to note only a few salient points relevant for understanding the emergence of the idealist outlook.

### 3. CULT OF "SECRET KNOWLEDGE"

In the apparent chaos of the philosophical tendencies of the Upaniṣads, the more outstanding features with which the idealist outlook announces itself are generally clear. We have a clue to it in the name chosen for the texts.

The word *upaniṣad*—as suggested by its etymology and corroborated by its synonym *rahasyam*—means 'secret knowledge' or 'secret wisdom'. It is secret, because only a fortunate few of the age are supposed to be its custo-

dians. At the same time, this knowledge is considered supremely important, because it is believed to have a marvellous potency of its own.

All this gives us some idea of the distinctive peculiarity of the Upaniṣads. Their main theme is knowledge, but not knowledge in the ordinary sense. It is knowledge restricted to a few of the community and is moreover believed to have a mysterious power of its own.

In the Vedic literature this is something new. The traditional way of admitting this is to describe the Upaniṣad as a new offshoot of the Vedic literature representing its 'knowledge branch' or *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. The concept of knowledge acquires in the Upaniṣads an altogether new and somewhat fabulous significance.

"Knowledge—not much learning, but the understanding of metaphysical truths—was the impelling motive of the thinkers of the Upaniṣads. . . Knowledge was the one object of supreme value, the irresistible means of obtaining one's ends. The idea of the worth and efficacy of knowledge is expressed again and again throughout the Upaniṣads not only in connection with philosophical speculation, but also in practical affairs in life. . . So frequent are the statements describing the invulnerability and omnipotence of him who is possessed of this magic talisman, that *ya evaṃ veda*—'he who knows this'—becomes the most frequently recurring phrase of the Upaniṣads."<sup>11</sup>

But this emphasis on the power of knowledge must not be misunderstood. It is not what Bacon means when he says that "the improvement of man's mind and the improvement of his lot are one and the same thing." Knowledge which is so much valued in the Upaniṣads is not at all intended to be a better insight into nature, serving as the basis of a better mastery of it. It is not supposed to be a guide to any course of action leading to some desired result. What is believed, is that knowledge by itself fulfils all desires—i.e., fulfils these immediately, directly and automatically. How are we to understand such a belief?

There is only one answer to this. The belief is essentially magical. The typical Upaniṣadic way of expressing this magical belief is: "One who knows this reaches a full length of life, lives long, becomes great in offspring, great in cattle, great in fame." In so far as this is a belief in magic, there is nothing new about it in the Vedic tradition. The belief is overwhelmingly obvious in the *Atharvaveda* and the *Yajurveda*: it assumes the most grotesque form in the *Brāhmaṇa*-s. As appended to the *Brāhmaṇa*-s, the Upaniṣads do not outgrow the belief in magic. This is already discussed by Edgerton<sup>12</sup> in his remarkable paper *Upaniṣads : What do they seek and why?*

What Edgerton does not discuss, however, is another important point. In spite of the lingering of the magical belief in the Upaniṣads, there is

also something strikingly new about the texts. In the earlier strata of the Vedic literature, the concept of metaphysical wisdom is itself absent. Hence there is no question of viewing it as possessing magical potency. In the early Vedic age, in other words, the belief in the potency of magic is there. But it is the belief in the magical potency of the ritual acts. In the Upaniṣads, the belief is clearly displaced. It is now the belief in the magical efficacy of secret wisdom, from which this literature receives its name.

If the persistence of magical belief indicates that the Upaniṣadic thinkers do not fully outgrow their ancestral convictions, the displacement of the belief to secret wisdom shows the new theoretical temper of the age. What is decisive about the Upaniṣads is this fetish of secret wisdom. In it is absorbed whatever still survives of the earlier ideas and attitudes. In the altered conditions in which they live, the Upaniṣadic thinkers find the mere stock of their ancestral convictions inadequate for their own purposes, howsoever otherwise strong the hangover of these may be. Thus, though in a number of passages great veneration is expressed for the ancient compilations of *saṃhitā*-s, other passages of the Upaniṣads state in so many words that the mere knowledge of the *saṃhitā*-s is not enough for the new pursuit after metaphysical wisdom. An example of the latter is the story of Nārada and Sanatkumāra. Nārada approaches the latter and declares that in the stock of knowledge he already possesses are included the *R̥gveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Apparently dissatisfied with all this, he wants to be initiated into the secret wisdom of Sanatkumāra. And the first thing that the philosopher tells him is that all these branches of knowledge—inclusive of the knowledge of the four ancient compilations—are ‘mere names’ (*nāmam*): these have no more value than a merely nominal one.

#### 4. PHILOSOPHY AND NOBILITY

Who is this Vedic philosopher that has the audacity to declare that even the *R̥gveda* etc. are mere names? We do not know the exact answer. Keith<sup>13</sup> says that he is just a mythical sage of the Upaniṣads. But it is saying something too vague to have a meaning. The Upaniṣad that tells the story of Sanatkumāra declares, “People call him Skanda—yea, they call him Skanda.” In Indian mythology Skanda is the name of the god of war. Does then Sanatkumāra belong to the class of the warrior nobles? Does the Upaniṣad want us to connect the new nobility with the new theoretical temper of the age?

The evidence of Sanatkumāra may by itself be too thin to support such a possibility. But the possibility is there and it cannot be easily dismissed.

Many other legends of the Upaniṣads suggest it. Keith<sup>14</sup> sums these up as follows:

"In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (v.11-24) five learned Brahmins desire to learn from Uddālaka Āruṇi the nature of the Ātman Vaiśvānara; he doubts his ability to explain it, and as a result all six betake themselves to the king Aśvapati Kaikeya, who gives them instructions, after first demonstrating the inaccuracy of their knowledge. In a narrative which is preserved in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (ii.1) and the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* (iv) a scholar, Gārga Bālāki, undertakes to reveal the nature of *brahman* to the king Ajātaśatru of Kāśī: he propounds twelve views—or in the *Kauṣītaki*, sixteen—which are all defective, and the king then explains the Ātman to him by the principle of deep sleep, prefacing the observation that it is reverse of the rule for a Brahmin to betake himself to a Kṣatriya for instruction. Another legend in the *Chāndogya* (i.8.9) shows the Brahmin being instructed in the nature of ether, as the ultimate basis of all things, by the king Pravāhaṇa Jaivali . . . Less important is the fact that the Brahmin Nārada is represented in the *Chāndogya* as being a recipient of information from Sanatkumāra, later the god of war, who tells the former that all this Vedic lore is mere name. The great text regarding the doctrine of transmigration is put forth by Pravāhaṇa Jaivali to Āruṇi with the remark that the Brahmin have never before had this information, which so far had remained the monopoly of the Kṣatriyas. In a third version of this account, given in the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, the king is Citra Gāṅgyāyani."

What do all these legends imply? Keith<sup>15</sup> is inclined to view these as "delicate and effective piece of flattery", i.e., of the kings by the priests who compile the Upaniṣads. This is taking a rather casual view of the Upaniṣadic material. The other way of misunderstanding the same is to take the Upaniṣadic legends at their face value. This is done by those who argue that the Upaniṣadic philosophy is the creation of the Kṣatriya caste. However even assuming that the legends are to be taken seriously, the fact remains that, except perhaps the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul, the theoretical innovations attributed to the kings and nobles are on the whole secondary in importance. Compared to these, the speculative constructions attributed to a thinker like Yājñavalkya is much more imposing. But Yājñavalkya is a priest and not a noble. This easily disproves the theory of the Kṣatriya origin of the Upaniṣadic philosophy in the sense in which it is usually put. But it proves nothing against the fact connecting the nobility with the new philosophy, for without the patronage of the nobles even Yājñavalkya could not philosophise. The point is not how much the kings and nobles directly contribute to the philosophical activity of the age. The point rather is that without their political and financial support Upaniṣadic

idealism is not adequately explained. This is best illustrated by the case of Yājñavalkya.

## 5. MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS OF AN IDEALIST

Secret wisdom of the age, as we have seen, is imagined to have the most wonderful power of its own. The power is so great that it promises not merely the worldly things like cattle, offspring and fame; it can even assure something which nothing else can.

In an oft-quoted legend of the Upaniṣad, Yājñavalkya—about to retire—wants to have his property settled among his two wives, called Kātyāyanī and Maitreyī.<sup>16</sup>

“Then said Maitreyī, ‘If now, Sir, the whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal thereby?’

‘No,’ said Yājñavalkya, ‘as the life of the rich, even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth.’

Then said Maitreyī, ‘What should I do with that through which I may not be immortal? What you know, Sir, that indeed tell me.’”

This delights the philosopher and he initiates the wife into the secret knowledge he possesses.

The importance of this story for illustrating the new attitude of the Upaniṣadic philosopher is often emphasised. That is rightly done. A considerable number of other passages of the Upaniṣads asserts that the secret wisdom of the age promises immortality.<sup>17</sup> But Yājñavalkya’s story has to be understood in more aspects than one.

The word for the immortal used in it is *amṛta*. The early poets of the *R̥gveda* are aware of the word no doubt. But they use it as a plain rhetoric, usually to describe euphoria induced by their intoxicating *soma*.<sup>18</sup> But the idea of ‘secret wisdom’ leading to immortality never occurs to them, nor does the idea of ‘property settlement’ in the Upaniṣadic sense. The reasons for this are quite simple. They do not have property as Yājñavalkya does<sup>19</sup> and hence no opportunity to cultivate the cult of secret wisdom.

We shall presently see from where this property of the philosopher comes. But whatever its source, it obviously relieves him of the problem of maintaining himself by the manual labour of his own. How can he, without being thus relieved, devote himself to the cult of pure consciousness? The basic requirement for this is leisure enough for the purpose. The contempt for the verdict practice on which the idealist outlook depends throughout its Indian career, can be possible for the philosopher only in so far as he

is relieved of the basic responsibility of practical life—in short, in so far as he is ensured of the existence of a leisured class.

By contrast, the material conditions in which the early Vedic poets lived did not permit them all this. With their control over nature comparatively rudimentary, they could not but be obsessed with the problem of physical survival—a problem which was solved in ancient society by a greater degree of collective functioning of the community. The devotion of a selected few of the community to the cultivation of pure speculation was not yet objectively possible, for the community did not produce enough surplus to meet their material requirements. In the earlier strata of the *R̥gveda*, songs extolling the collective labour of the community are in fact innumerable. I have elsewhere quoted some of these.<sup>20</sup>

In the Upanisadic India—i.e., in the newly developed states of the Indo-Gangetic plain of about eighth and seventh century B.C.—things are different. There is a considerable progress in the control over nature, thanks mainly to the introduction of iron implements on some scale and the improved technique of agriculture and handicrafts, which are now added to cattle raising. Human labour acquires the ability to produce much more than is necessary for its bare maintenance. At the same time, the products of labour do not go to the labourers themselves, or, as the early Vedic poets put it, 'shared out' among the tribesmen. In fact, this activity of sharing out is so important to these early poets, that in their mythological imagination, it is raised to the status of veritable deities. They call these deities Bhaga and Amśa, literally 'the share'.<sup>21</sup> In the Upanisadic India, however, society is split into a ruling class and a toiling class. The former consists mainly of the kings and nobles who usurp the surplus produced by the latter. An early Indian law-giver wants to rationalise this accomplished fact. Describing the ideal mode of living of the king or noble, he says:

"He shall live on the surplus."<sup>22</sup>

The accumulation of this surplus makes them enormously wealthy in terms of the age. Depending on this surplus to maintain themselves on a grand scale, they have all the leisure of life to pursue and patronise the cult of pure consciousness. The kings surrounded by their flatterers (*rājanya bandhu*) are often described by the Upanisads as taking very keen interest in philosophical discourses. But this does not mean that they have the monopoly of the 'secret wisdom'. Outside the circle of the nobility, there are persons with exceptional gifts claiming profounder wisdom endowed with more imposing power.

Such a person is the famous Yājñavalkya.

Attracted by the magical potency of his wisdom—and above all perhaps by the rumour that this wisdom ensures even immortality or an escape from death—one of the prosperous kings of the age, Janaka of Videha, is only too eager to part with a substantial portion of his own fortune to the philosopher as payment for being initiated into his secret wisdom. Without being a direct plunderer of the surplus, Yājñavalkya becomes entitled to a part thereof.

Nothing is more attractive for the kings than the prospect of overcoming death or attaining immortality. It is basically the same temptation that leads the Pharaohs of Egypt to waste the most colossal amount of wealth to build pyramids. Compared to them, the kings of the petty Upaniṣadic states have less to spend. But that is not the point. The point is that for these kings also the temptation of overcoming death is irresistible. They spend for it in accordance with their means.

All this does not mean that for Yājñavalkya and his co-philosophers the promise of immortality ensured by their secret wisdom is necessarily a commercial talk. It may as well be a part of their make-believe. But whether make-believe or not, it does pay. And because it pays, it can relieve the philosopher of the problem of maintaining himself by his own labour. It even enables Yājñavalkya to amass considerable property of his own—the property that he wants to settle before retirement. For him it is quite logical to tell the wife that this property does not ensure immortality; immortality is ensured only by his secret wisdom. Why else should his patron agree to pay him so well for being initiated into the secret wisdom? However, what he does not add is that though this property does not ensure immortality, it can and does ensure the leisure for cultivating the cult of pure wisdom. Without the solid support of this material wealth—the grand gift of his patron—the alternative for him is working for living. His philosophy of pure contemplation does not harmonise with a life of manual labour. From this point of view, his worldly assets are not so unconnected with his world-denying philosophy, as he wants his wife to believe.

Thus for understanding Yājñavalkya and his philosophy it is necessary to take note of his property and understand its sources. Where does it come from? The Upaniṣads are not at all vague about it. Here is a typical description of the general setting of his philosophical discourse: <sup>22</sup>

Janaka, king of Videha, was seated.

Yājñavalkya came up.

To him the king said, 'Yājñavalkya, what brings you here? Is it because you want cattle or hair-splitting discussions?'

'Indeed both, your majesty,' he said.



We shall presently see that in Upaniṣadic days material wealth is largely measured by cattle. Thus this great idealist philosopher, with his intense contempt for the material world, shows no hesitation to admit that he is not interested merely in philosophy; he is also interested in the payment for it. Metaphysically the cattle—like everything else in the world—are unreal no doubt. But these are not to be ignored, for without these the metaphysician is not ensured of his leisured-class existence that enables him to spin the world-denying philosophy.

Yājñavalkya is thus confronted here with a question much more serious than that of mere theoretical consistency. It is too early for the Indian idealists to invest the philosophical trick of distinguishing between the purely provisional truth of practical life (*vyavahārika* or *saṃvṛti satya*) and truth in its highest metaphysical sense (*pāramārthika satya*). Yājñavalkya does not say that the cattle, though ultimately unreal, are real for practical life only. Compared to the later idealists, he is naive enough to admit that he is interested in cattle too, whatever may be their ultimate metaphysical status. How indeed can he be fully earnest about hair-splitting discussions without being provided with the material means for the purposes? Belonging as he does not to the class of the plunderers of the surplus produced by the direct producers, he has to depend on a part of the plundered surplus which he expects to receive from the king. And the king in his turn is only too eager to offer him the material wealth he needs, for his wisdom promises immortality. At the end of each of his discourse on philosophy, the king offers him the gift of a thousand cows and a bull as big as an elephant—a very considerable amount of wealth for the Upaniṣadic age.

At the end of the final discourse Yājñavalkya declares, 'Verily, Janaka, you have reached fearlessness.' Janaka, king of Videha, says, 'My fearlessness comes unto you, noble sir, you who make us know fearlessness. Adoration to you! Here are the Videhas; here am I at your service.'<sup>24</sup>

Fearlessness means here the fearlessness from death. Before passing on to see how Yājñavalkya's philosophy of the pure spirit creates such an assurance for the king, let us try to be clearer about Yājñavalkya's awareness—though in his own way—of the material basis of this idealist philosophy.

If Yājñavalkya is the greatest idealist philosopher of the Upaniṣads, he is also the most money-minded thinker of the age. Elsewhere he comes out with the rather startling admission that he has respect for metaphysicians interested in the ultimate reality, but what he is interested in over and above is the possession of cows. As he puts it, "Reverence be to him who is most learned in sacred writ! We are but hankering after cows."<sup>25</sup>

The legend in which this occurs brings us back to the same setting of philosophical discussion that we have just noted. Janaka, king of Videha,



gets a sacrifice performed and lavishes gifts on the priests performing it. A large number of them are naturally attracted to his assembly. The king wants to find out who among these priests possesses the highest wisdom. So he has a thousand cows enclosed in a place, with ten pieces of gold tied to the horns of each. And he declares that the wisest of the priests is to take these away. While the other priests hesitate, Yājñavalkya asks his pupil to take them away on his behalf. This enrages the other priests. How is it that Yājñavalkya takes it for granted that he is the wisest among them all? To this the philosopher comes out with the statement just quoted. He has respect for metaphysics; but he is also aware of the need of material wealth.

But the other priests want him to prove his philosophical superiority. So they start questioning him. Significantly their first question is whether he knows the secret to immortality: "Since everything here is coextensive with death—everything is overpowered by death—how can the sacrificer (i.e., the royal donor) move beyond death?"

The Upaniṣad wants us to believe that Yājñavalkya alone knows the answer to this. But what is the answer? The metaphysical discourse attributed to him is a long one. Its main point is the gradual unfolding of the idealist outlook. But how is this outlook supposed to overcome death and ensure immortality? There is only one way of doing this and that is to remove from the realm of reality the physical world as a whole, and along with this the physical facts of birth and death. As Yājñavalkya argues, the soul which is pure consciousness and bliss, is the only reality. Being completely uncontaminated by anything material, it is by nature aloof from what appears to the mortal eyes as birth and death. Thus death, like birth, is completely unreal. How can one who knows this be any longer haunted by the fear of death?

This is not insuring oneself against the fact of death, before which the philosopher is as helpless as any other mortal. But it is a way of inducing a subjective change into oneself which helps one to overcome—though only in ideas and imagination—the sense of death and the terrors thereof.

Significantly, being conscious in his own way of the material basis of his idealism, Yājñavalkya never forgets his patron while talking of immortality. He declares that the immortality he is talking of is to be attained not only by the metaphysician who knows the ultimate reality as pure spirit, but also by his patron on whose gifts the metaphysician subsists:<sup>26</sup>

"When born, indeed, he (the spirit) is not born,  
Who would again beget him?  
Reality is pure consciousness and pure bliss.  
It is the goal reached by the donors of wealth,

As well as by those who are firmly established on the knowledge of this."

At least one point of this declaration is striking and it needs some discussion. The donor and the philosopher reach the same goal. What needs be added to it, however, is that they reach it in different ways. The philosopher creates for the donor the illusion of immortality. The donor creates for the philosopher the material conditions for this illusion-making.

These conditions are in short the conditions of social parasitism. It kills the philosopher's spirit of interrogating nature, coerces his consciousness to total introversion and makes him a philosopher of pure spirit, for which death is as meaningless as birth.

For our understanding of the sources of idealism, this parasitism of the philosopher is of crucial importance. One way of judging it is to have some concrete idea of the philosopher's material assets. We begin with some clues to these as preserved in the Upaniṣads.

In the account of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* just quoted, Yājñavalkya's pupil drives away for him one thousand cows, with ten *pāda*-s of gold tied to the horns of each. In the next account of the same Upaniṣad, king Janaka—awed by Yājñavalkya's breath-taking flights of pure reason—four times offers him 'a thousand cows and a bull as large as an elephant'.<sup>27</sup> This is followed by another account of the same text in which the same philosopher receives from the same donor for the same reason five thousand cows, in instalments of one thousand each.<sup>28</sup> This is immediately followed in the Upaniṣad by the account already referred to—the account in which the philosopher wants to have his property settled among his two wives, Kātyāyanī and Maitreyī.

The logical sequence followed by the text is not to be overlooked. It tells us of the need felt by the philosopher of the settlement of property only after describing the process of its accumulation.

Let us try to be clearer about the property accumulated. Not to speak of other accounts, the three that we have just mentioned tell us of a total of ten thousand cows, besides the hundred thousand *pāda*-s of gold. But this is only elementary arithmetic, and lest we are misled by it, the Upaniṣad tells us also of the bulls as big as elephants. The cows accumulated by the priest-philosopher also multiply. We have in another Upaniṣad a rough calculation of the rate of this multiplication. Satyakāma Jābāla goes to Haridrumata Gautama, desiring to be a student of sacred knowledge. After having received him as a pupil, he (the priest-philosopher) separated out four hundred lean, weak cows and said, 'Follow these, my dear.'

As he was driving them on, he said, 'I may not return without a thousand.' So he lived away a number of years. When they came to a thousand, the bull spoke to him, saying: 'Satyakāma!'

'Sir,' he replied.

'We have reached a thousand, my dear. Bring us to the teacher's home.'<sup>29</sup>

If this rate of increase satisfies the Upaniṣadic calculation in one case, there is no reason why it should not be applicable to another. 'The ten thousand cows received by Yājñavalkya according to three accounts of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* are soon supposed to multiply into twenty five thousand. It does not take much time again for the twenty five thousand to multiply into 62,500. And so on.

All this is talking too much of cows no doubt. Why do the Upaniṣads do it? Macdonell and Keith answer, "It is clear that cattle, not land, was the real foundation of wealth, just as in Ireland, Italy (cf. *pecunia*), Greece, etc. Cattle could be, and were, used individually, but land was not open to a man's free disposal; no doubt, at any rate, the consent of the family or of the community might be required."<sup>30</sup>

Thus assuming that the Upaniṣad does not want us to look at the priest-philosopher as a member of landed aristocracy, there is no doubt that it wants us to look at him as an extremely wealthy person—a real aristocrat of the age. Besides, the question of land is not to be totally dismissed, for there is the physical problem of accommodating the cattle. How does the priest-philosopher solve this problem?

Whatever might have been the system of land tenure in Upaniṣadic India, there are in these texts unmistakable accounts of the gift of villages by the kings and nobles to the custodians of secret wisdom.<sup>31</sup> We read of this more explicitly in the Pali canonical literature of the Buddhists, which give us an idea of the social conditions not much later than that of the Upaniṣads: "The brahmin villages or settlements were mainly in the Magadhan and Kosalan regions . . . The reason for the presence of the brahmin *gāma*-s in these two regions is likely to be found in the early development of *brahmadeyya* land ownership in these areas. *Brahmadeyya* was the royal gift of land or an estate to well-known brahmins and others, for the services, probably ritual in nature, which they rendered to the king. Some of the *brahmadeyya* lands are specially described as brahmin *gāma*-s. Khanumata and Opasada, which are given respectively by kings Pasenadi and Bimbisara to the brahmin Kuṭadanta and Canki are thus described. On the other hand, Campa, Ukkattha and Salavatika, although these places belong to the brahmin Sonadanda, Pokkharasadi and Lohicca respectively, are known only as *brahmadeyya* lands . . . In Ekanala, the farmer

Bharadvāja-brahmin has so much land that he needs 500 ploughshares to plough it."<sup>33</sup>

We do not read in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* of any royal gift of village to Yājñavalkya. But the presumption is that he has some villages or at least pens vast enough to accommodate his ever-multiplying thousands of cows. If so, the further presumption is that there is also need for him to have proper security arrangement for such an enormous amount of wealth.

This leads us to the description of the prosperous Brahmins given by the Buddha—the Brahmins who "have themselves guarded in fortified towns, with moats dug out round them and cross-bars let down before the gates, by men girt with long swords."<sup>34</sup>

The picture of the parasitism of the priest-philosopher is not difficult to reconstruct. It is in this parasitism that we have the clue to his world-denying idealism.

The Buddha is himself inclined to look at these new parasites—the prosperous Brahmins of his age—as a fall from the simple moral grandeur of the ancient Vedic poets. He asks one of them:<sup>35</sup>

"But just so, Ambaṭṭha, those ancient poets (or seers) . . . the authors of the verses . . . whose ancient form of words so chanted, uttered or composed, the Brahmins of today chant over again and rehearse, . . . that you should on that account be a seer or have attained the state of a seer . . . ? Now, what think you Ambaṭṭha? What have you heard when Brahmins old and well stricken in years, teachers of yours or their teachers, were talking together—did these ancient poets, whose verses you chant over and repeat, parade about, well groomed, perfumed, trimmed as to their hair and beard, adorned with garlands and gems, clad in white garments, in the full possession and enjoyment of the five pleasures of sense, as you and your teacher too do now?"

The Buddha is evidently transforming the reality of the rudimentary control over nature of the ancient Vedic poets into a romantic picture of their great asceticism. The primitive poets are really not so ascetic as he wants us to think. At the same time, where the Buddha is unquestionably correct is that these ancient poets live a life quite different from the parasitical one of their later champions. As a result, the philosophy of the pure spirit of the Upaniṣadic idealists can hardly make any sense to them.

We shall have a brief note on the general theoretical temper of these ancient poets and then pass on to see why this is so different from that of the Upaniṣadic idealists.

## 6. PRIMITIVE PROTO-MATERIALISM OF ANCIENT VEDIC PERIOD

Among the later Indian philosophers those who want to take their stand exclusively on Upaniṣadic idealism are the Advaita Vedāntists. According to them, an appropriate descriptive epithet<sup>3</sup> of their philosophy is *Śārīraka-mīmāṃsā* or *Śārīraka* philosophy. *Śārīraka* means the body that is filthy. Upaniṣadic idealism is given such a name because it is the philosophy of the pure spirit or soul which, much to the annoyance of the idealists, remains imprisoned as it were in the defiled body.

The underlying idea is strongly reminiscent of the ancient Greek idealist, Plato, who—disgusted with the body as a prison for the soul—goes to the extent of describing the desire for death as the right mood of the philosopher. A few centuries before Plato, Yājñavalkya also gives an enviable description of a dying man who, while dying, gets released from the fetters of the defiled body and the deceptions of the sense-organs. It is tempting to quote here a few lines from these two eminent ancient idealists and see how intense a contempt for the body is characteristic of the ancient idealist outlook. Argues Plato:

“As long as we are encumbered with body, and our soul is contaminated with such an evil, we can never fully attain what we desire; and this, we say, is truth. For the body subjects us to innumerable hindrances on account of its necessary support . . . and it fills us with longings, desires, fears, all kind of fancies, and a multitude of absurdities, so that, as it is said in real truth, by reason of the body it is never possible for us to make any advance in wisdom . . . It has then in reality been demonstrated that if we are ever to know anything purely, we must be separated from the body, and contemplate the things themselves by mere soul. And then, as it seems, we shall obtain that which we desire, and which we profess ourselves to be lovers of—namely wisdom—when we are dead, as reason shows, but not while we are alive. For if it is not possible to know anything purely in conjunction with the body, one of these two things must follow: either that we can never acquire knowledge, or only after we are dead, for then the soul will subsist apart by itself, separate from the body, but not before.”<sup>35</sup>

Such is the *śārīraka* philosophy of ancient Greece. The way in which Yājñavalkya puts it is to give an enviable description of a dying man—enviable, because while dying, he is getting progressively relieved from the fetters of the body:

He is becoming one, they say he does not see.  
He is becoming one, they say he does not smell.

## SOURCES OF IDEALISM

He is becoming one, they say he does not taste.  
He is becoming one, they say he does not speak.  
He is becoming one, they say he does not hear. .  
He is becoming one, they say he does not think.  
He is becoming one, they say he does not touch.  
He is becoming one, they say he does not know.

The point of his heart becomes lighted up. By that light the self departs, either by the eye, or by the head, or by other bodily parts. After him, as he goes out, the life goes out. After the life, as it goes out, all the breaths go out. He becomes one with intelligence . . .<sup>36</sup>

This, in short, is an important feature of the philosophy of the pure spirit. It is a philosophy of the most intense contempt for the body, so much so, that it goes to the extent of glorifying death as by far the greatest bliss conceivable. Paradoxically, the cult of death is also made to pass as the philosophy ensuring immortality. This combination of the opposites is possible, because in the philosophy of pure spirit birth is as fictitious as death.

For understanding the development of Vedic thought, however, it is necessary to note that a philosophical view like this would have gone completely over the heads of the early Vedic poets, who feel that nothing is more important than nourishing the body with food and drink. The feeling is so intense that they are led even to conceive food—called *pitu*—as one of their deities. The way in which they praise this deity, though primitive, is also quite refreshing, particularly when we return to it after the morbid speculations on the desirability of death. We quote in rough rendering a part of the song in praise of food from the *Rgveda*:<sup>37</sup>

“Savoury food, honeyed food, we welcome thee; be our protector. Come to us, beneficial food, we welcome thee; be our protector. Come to us, beneficial food,—a source of delight, a friend of the well-respected, and having no enemy. Your flavours, oh food, are diffused through regions, as the winds are spreading through the sky. These men, oh food who are your distributors, —oh most sweet food—they who are the eaters of thee and thy juices, increase like you with elongated necks. The minds of the mighty deities, oh food, are fixed upon thee . . . Oh food, the wealth which is associated with the mountains went to thee. Oh sweet one, listen to us and be accessible to our eating. And since we enjoy the abundance of the waters and plants, therefore oh body may you grow fat. And since we enjoy the drink *soma*, thy mixture with boiled milk and boiled barley, therefore oh body may you grow fat . . .”

Specially striking is the last refrain: *vātāpe pīva it bhava*, 'Oh body, may you grow fat.'

This is not a philosophical view of course, and it does not pretend to be one. But its evidence is not to be overlooked. It does represent a theoretical temper and that is fully opposed to the *śārīraka* philosophy of the Upaniṣads. And the point is that the general theoretical temper underlying the song just quoted, rather than being exceptional, is really typical of the ancient songs of the *Rgveda*.

It is tempting to raise here another question.

In later Indian philosophy, the most outspoken materialists are called the Lokāyatas or Cārvākas, according to whom there is nothing called the soul over and above the body. They are despised in various ways. One of these is to say that the very name Cārvāka is indicative of the vulgarity of the philosophy. It is supposed to be derived from the root *charv*, meaning to eat or to chew. These philosophers are called the Cārvākas because—unaware of any lofty ideal—they care only for eating and drinking.

Such an etymology of the name is probably fanciful. But even admitting it, we cannot escape a simple question. Which of the later philosophical views—the Cārvāka and the *śārīraka*—suits the theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets? There is only one answer to it. The poets go into ecstasy over food for the solid reason that it makes the body fat. It is possible to imagine the ancient poets understanding the Cārvāka philosophy but not the *śārīraka*. This is one of the reasons why I have elsewhere<sup>38</sup> tried to describe the ancient Vedic thought as indicative of primitive proto-materialism. It is on the ruins of this that the idealistic outlook later emerges.

## 7. PRIMORDIAL UNITY OF WISDOM AND ACTION

It remains for us to discuss only another point in this connection. What is it that accounts for the difference in the theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets with that of the Upaniṣadic idealists?

Compared to the Upaniṣadic philosophers, the *Rgvedic* poets are ignorant people no doubt. Their stock of ideas is very poor; their capacity for conceptual construction is so limited that they can only imagine deities in things they do not understand. The significance of evidence and reasoning for answering questions concerning truth and reality is something beyond their mental horizon. Indeed they are not even properly aware of such questions, not to speak of answering these. The Upaniṣadic philosophers are far ahead of them. For them these questions acquire profound importance and they try to answer these on the strength of evidences and arguments.

All these are but on the surface. But these do not answer the question



we are asking ourselves. It is not the question concerning the *richness* of thought but rather of its *general direction*. The want of richness of early Vedic thought compared to the Upaniṣadic one is easily understood in terms of the progress of thought. But the point is that in the Upaniṣadic idealism, we see not only a progress of thought but also a dangerous turn taken by it. In spite of developing superior equipment for knowing, the idealists proceed with its aid only to condemn the objects of knowledge. Their way of knowing becomes hostile to what is known, i.e., what is known by experience and the application of reason. This hostility of knowledge to the things known is not to be found in the poets of the *R̥gveda*, howsoever limited may be the range of their experience and howsoever imperfectly developed may be their power of the application of reason.

In short, the general direction of their thought is different. It needs an explanation. How are we to explain it?

We have tried to understand the general direction of thought of the Upaniṣadic idealists in terms of their cult of secret wisdom—wisdom estranged from action. It will negatively confirm this understanding if we can now see that the absence of such a general direction of thought of the early Vedic poets is correlated to the absence in their consciousness of any separation of wisdom from action.

Is there this negative confirmation?

It is there, and the unique advantage of the Vedic literature is that it enables us to see it clearly. Composed over a period of thousand years or more, it retains a close continuity of inner development. From the Upaniṣad or Veda-end we can move backwards to the earlier strata of the Vedic literature. As we do this, we have the glimpse—distant and dim though it may be—of at least the relics of a primitive past qualitatively different from that of the Upaniṣadic age. What is so important about it is that it enables us to see—depending all the time on definite literary records—that just as the Upaniṣadic society emerges on the ruins of an ancient undifferentiated community, so also the theoretical temper of the Upaniṣadic idealists emerges on the ruins of an ancient theoretical temper, which is perhaps best described as representing a primordial complex of wisdom and action. Wisdom, far from becoming the secret possession of a fortunate few, is not yet dissociated from action. Hence it does not develop any contempt for nature with which, through action, men have intercourse. We have in this the clue to the primitive proto-materialism of the early Vedic period.

I have elsewhere discussed the relics of the primitive undivided community in the *R̥gveda*. I shall try to discuss here some of the relics of the primordial unity of wisdom and action as found in the *R̥gveda*.

Mental labour in its most exalted form, as known to these pre-literate



poets, is the oral composition of songs, or, in their own words, 'making verses by the mouth'.<sup>39</sup> However, to themselves it is only a craft and its glory is best understood on the model of the other craft they know so well, viz. that of the carpenter fashioning the chariot.

For understanding the general theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets, this point is of crucial importance. We shall discuss a few evidence in some detail.

An entire hymn of the *R̥gveda*<sup>40</sup> has for its theme the drunken monologue of Indra, the war-chief. It describes all sorts of great feats that he boasts of, performed under the influence of *soma*. One of these is that of composing the Vedic song as beautifully as the carpenter makes the chariot. As Indra puts it, *aham taṣṭeva vandhuram paryacāmi hṛdā matim*. (X.119.5) Śāyaṇa, the most orthodox Vedic commentator, interprets it as meaning the act of 'making by the mind' the hymn in the way in which the carpenter makes the chariot-seat. 'This cannot be said by one for whom manual labour—compared to mental labour—is a degradation.

'This evidence cannot be dismissed as mere drunken raving, for the way in which Indra views here the art of poetry is a frequently recurring theme in the *R̥gveda*.

In a song in praise of Indra, the poet Puruccheṣa says: this song is fashioned for you by one desirous of wealth, just as the carpenter endowed with wisdom (*dhīraḥ*) fashions the chariot. (i.130.6) The adjective *dhīraḥ*, 'endowed with wisdom', for the carpenter may appear to us as unconventional, for we are not accustomed to associate wisdom with manual operation. We think of the wise man mainly as a contemplator, not a craftsman. But the ancient poets do not think so. For them manual skill is itself a mark of wisdom. Wisdom is yet to be dissociated from action in the consciousness of the Vedic poets.

As if to leave nothing vague about their own attitude, these poets freely use the words *ataṣṭūma* and *ataṣṭam* for poetry-making. These words, derived from the root *taṣṭ*, 'to make or to fashion', refer primarily to the carpenter's craft. It is this root that gives to the Vedic people the words for the carpenter—*taṣṭan* and *taṣṭṛ*.<sup>41</sup>

In a song in praise of Agni, the poet says, 'I have fashioned this song for thee just as the wise carpenter fashions the chariot.' (V.2.11) The expression used is: *ratham na dhīraḥ svapā atāṣṭam*. In describing the art of poetry, such an expression appears extraordinary particularly for people to whom this art represents intellectual work *par excellence*. But exactly the same expression is used in another song—this time in the context of offering to Indra freshly composed songs along with clothes and chariot. (V.29.15) Elsewhere, a poet says, 'Let these songs please the deities Aśvins—songs that

are fashioned by us (*taṣṣāma*) as beautifully as the carpenter fashions the chariot.' (V.73.10). Describing his own composition another poet says. 'This extensive hymn of mine, shining with brightness, is moving towards the sun and brings welfare to men. I have composed it in a way in which the carpenter makes a strongly built chariot fit for being drawn by the horse.' (X.93.12)

Even today, we talk of 'brushing up a poem'. The ancient poets also speak of it. But they speak of it in their own way—in the analogy of scraping the wood as is done by the carpenter. Thus the poet says, *abhi taṣṭeva dīdhayā manīṣām*, 'brighten up the song like the carpenter'. (III.38.1). Sāyaṇa interprets it to mean brightening up the song in the way in which the carpenter makes a piece of wood shine by scraping it.

In accordance with the general attitude underlying all this, the *R̥gveda* conceives the poet as a *kāru*. (II.39.8; VIII.62.4; etc). Derived from the root *kr*, 'to make', it means the maker. As the maker of song the poet has neither more nor less of social prestige than any other—the carpenter working on wood, the physician healing diseases, the girl grinding corn on the stone, the arrow-maker making arrows with sticks, stones and feathers. This is the impression we have from the oft-quoted labour song of the *R̥gveda* (IX.112), which, in spite of describing the division of labour in society, harps on the theme of the harmonious working of all.

Certain philological evidences indicate that in the ancient period any sharp distinction between wisdom and action is practically unknown. What the ancient poets are aware of is some kind of a primordial unity of the two—a point not easy to understand in accordance with later preoccupations. Here are a few examples.

In the *R̥gveda*, we come across an apparently peculiar word, *vidmanā-paśah*. We can perhaps best translate it as those that possess 'the wisdom of action' or 'knowledge which is also the know-how'. Palpably, it is used in the context of both manual and mental work: chariots with excellent wheels are fashioned with its aid (I.111.1) and it also forms the basis of the poets' craft. (I.31.1)

This is a rather rare word in the *R̥gveda* no doubt. It occurs only twice in the vast collection. But not so are certain other words of more decisive significance. The Vedic poets freely use certain words to mean sometimes wisdom and sometimes action. Such words are *dhī*, *śacī*, *kratu*. These mean wisdom; but these also mean action. All this creates an obvious problem for the compiler of the *Nighanṭu*, the earliest glossary of Vedic words. Are these to be put in the list of 'words meaning wisdom' (*prajñā nāmānī*) or in the list of 'words meaning action' (*karma nāmānī*)? The problem is solved by him by putting the words in both the lists.

These words, therefore, tell their own story. To the ancient poets wisdom may as well be viewed as action, and action as wisdom. They are not yet aware of any sharp difference between the two. The only wisdom they care for is that of practical activity. Though primitive, it represents the attitude of uniting theory with practice. Incidentally, even the word *māyā*, which in the Advaita Vedānta philosophy means the inscrutable principle of cosmic illusion, retains in the *Rgveda* the sense of the primordial unity of wisdom and action.

Philological evidences like these are reminiscent of ancient Greece before the birth of the idealist outlook there: <sup>42</sup> "Prior to the fifth century, not the contrast but the unity of thought and deed is uppermost. In the epic and lyric, knowledge is practical; to know is to know how; wisdom is still in action and therefore a power to act. Heraclitus, the first of the philosophers to turn to this theme, assumes as a matter of course that *logos* and *sophie* carry the double reference to true words (and thought) and right deed."

With the growth of slavery and the consequent degradation of manual labour as something by nature slavish, wisdom wants to free itself of its old bond with action, and therefore also from the material world with which, through action, man has intercourse. This tendency culminates in Plato:

"For Plato wisdom meant not the knowledge of nature, but of super-nature constituted by ideas . . . As for art—that power to control nature the slow acquisition of which by man, Democritus regarded as identical with his self-differentiation with animals—it was relegated by Plato to a kind of limbo. It belonged to the sphere of opinion, the bastard knowledge of the slave, not the truth of the philosopher."<sup>43</sup>

A similar development takes place in India and culminates in Upaniṣadic idealism. For the present, we are trying to explore the sub-soil of this idealism. The art of poetry as understood by the ancient poets gives us a clue to it. Let us take up this clue again.

We hear of a few female poets whose compositions find place in the *Rgveda*. (*Bṛhaddevalā* II.82.4). One of them is called Ghosā. She sums up her song, saying, 'Oh Aśvins, I have composed this song for thee in the way in which the Bhṛguś fashion the chariot.' (X.39.14). Though expressed in different words, the idea reoccurs in the *Rgveda*: we shall make songs for Indra in the way in which the Bhṛguś fashion the chariot. (IV.16.20)

Who are the Bhṛguś, whose manual skill the poets want to imitate so admiringly? Commenting on Ghosā's poem, Sāyaṇa answers: 'Because of their connection with action (*karmayogāt*), the Rbhus are here referred to as the Bhṛguś.' The answer is apparently peculiar. The Rbhus stand for a community of Vedic deities while the name Bhṛguś 'appears in the historical

character of the designation of a tribe'.<sup>44</sup> Why should the 'connection with action' create in the commentator's imagination such a substitution of the deities by the tribesmen?

Sāyaṇa mentions no ground for this and thus leaves us only to conjecture. One of the conjectures is that the commentator's imagination is saturated with Vedic mythology, in which the Ṛbhus occupy a peculiar position. They are originally only human beings, but they are eventually raised to the status of deities because of 'their connection with action'—their craftsmanship or labour skill—a very important form of which is making excellent chariots. Could it be that all this leads the commentator so easily to associate the Ṛbhus with the Bhṛgus because of the mention of the activity of chariot-making?

In any case, one point is beyond doubt. Discussing the manual skill of chariot making, Sāyaṇa easily recalls the Ṛbhus. This is important, because it leads us to a fascinating feature of early Vedic mythology: manual work, far from carrying any social stigma about it, is considered so important that it raises ordinary human beings to the status of deities. We quote Macdonell's summary<sup>45</sup> of the relevant evidence of the *Ṛgveda*:

"Besides the higher gods of the Veda there are a number of mythical beings not regarded as having the divine nature fully and originally. The most important of these are Ṛbhus. They are celebrated in eleven hymns of the *Ṛgveda* and are mentioned by name over a hundred times . . . The Ṛbhus are about a dozen times called by the patronymic name of Saudhanvāna, son of Sudhanvan, 'the good archer' . . . With Indra they help mortals to victory (IV.37.6) and are invoked with him to crush foes (VII.48.3). They are said to have obtained the friendship of Indra by their skilful work (III.60.3; IV.35.7 & 9), for it is they who fashioned his steeds . . . The Ṛbhus are characteristically deft-handed (*suhastāḥ*) and skilful (IV.33.1 & 8; etc.), their skilful deeds being incomparable (III.60.4). They are frequently said to have acquired the rank of gods in consequence of their marvellous skill. Through their wonderful deeds they obtained divinity (III.60.1). By their skilful deeds they became gods and immortal, alighting like eagles in heaven (IV.35.8). They are men of the air who by their energy mounted to heaven (I.110.6). For their skilful services they went the path of immortality to the host of the gods (IV.35.3), obtaining immortality among the gods and their friendship (IV.33.3 & 4; IV.35.3; IV.36.4). But they were originally mortals, children of Manu, who by their industry acquired immortality (III.60.3; I.110.4) . . . They went to the gods and obtained the sacrifice, or a share of the sacrifice, among the gods through their skilful work (I.20.1 & 8; I.21.6 & 7) . . . They are thus sometimes expressly invoked as gods (IV.36.5; IV.37.1). Like the higher gods they are besought to give prosperity

and wealth (IV.33.8; IV.37.5) in cattle, horses, heroes (IV.34.10) and to grant vigour, nourishment, offspring, dexterity (I.111.2). They grant treasure to the soma presser (I.20.7; IV.35.6). He whom they help is invincible in fight (IV.36.6)."

Such then is the peculiarity of the mythological imagination of the ancient Vedic people. Excellence in manual skill is so marvellous that it raises ordinary human beings to the status of the gods. Since mythology does not grow out of nothing, all this wants us to postulate a society—with its characteristic mode of consciousness—in which the craftsmen along with their craft command great prestige.

Let us try to follow up the suggestion of Vedic mythology a little further.

How do the Ṛbhus acquire so much of excellence in arts and crafts? From whom do they receive the training for it? The *Bṛhaddevatā* answers: "46

"They become pupils of 'Tvaṣṭṛ. Tvaṣṭṛ instructed them in every art in which he was a master (*tvaṣṭā*). The All-gods, who are thoroughly versed in the arts, challenged them. They then made for the All-gods vehicles and weapons. They made the nectar-yielding cow . . . for Bṛhaspati, then for the Aśvins a divine car with three seats, and for Indra his two bay steeds; also what they did through Agni who had been dispatched to them by the gods . . . And 'Tvaṣṭṛ and Savitr, and the god of gods Prajāpati, summoning all the gods, bestowed immortality on the Ṛbhus."

This leads us to see the greatest craftsman of Vedic imagination. The poets call him 'Tvaṣṭṛ and describe in various ways his skill in arts and crafts: "47

"He is a skilful workman (I.85.9; III.54.12) producing various objects showing the skill of an artificer. He is in fact the most skilful of workmen, versed in crafty contrivances (X.53.9). He is several times said (V.31.4; etc) to have fashioned (*takṣ*) the bolt of Indra. He also sharpens the iron axe of Brahmanaspati (X.53.9). He formed a new cup (I.20.6) which contained the food of the *asura* (I.110.3) or the beverage of the gods (I.161.5; III.35.5). He thus possesses vessels out of which the gods drink (X.53.9)."

Interestingly, these ancient poets—because they are yet to know the mystery of biological reproduction—are inclined to see the hands of the great craftsman even behind the creation of men and animals: "48

"The *Ṛgveda* further states that Tvaṣṭṛ adorned all beings with form (X.110.9). He develops the germ in the womb and is the shaper of all forms, human and animal (I.88.9; VIII.91.8; X.184.1). Similar statements are frequently made in later Vedic texts, where he is characteristically a creator of forms. He himself is called omniform (*viśvarūpa*) oftener than any other deity in the *Ṛgveda*. As fashioner of living forms, he is frequently described

as presiding over generation and bestowing offspring (II.4.9; etc). Thus he is said to have fashioned husband and wife for each other from the womb (X.19.50). He has produced and nourishes a great variety of creatures (III.55.19) . . . He is indeed a universal father, for he produced the whole world."

Even some of the great Vedic gods—Bṛhaspati, Agni, Indra—are sometimes conceived as being created by this master craftsman.<sup>49</sup>

But who is this great god that gives shape practically to everything known to the Vedic poets? The best clue to him is to be found in his name:<sup>50</sup>

"The word (*tvastṛ*) is derived from a rare root *tvakṣ*, of which only one verbal form, besides some nominal derivatives, occurs in the *R̥gveda*, and the cognate of which, *thwakṣ*, is found in the *Avestā*. It appears to be identical in meaning with the common root *takṣ*, which is used with the name of 'Tvaṣṭṛ in referring to the fashioning of Indra's bolt. The meaning therefore appears to be the 'Fashioner' or 'Artificer'."

There are thus grounds to think that this god is only a personification of craftsmanship. In any case, his name is precariously akin to the Vedic word for the carpenter—*takṣan* or *taṣṭṛ*—both derived from the *takṣ*, meaning skill. In the songs ennobling the activities of his apprentices—the Ṛbhus—the most frequently recurring verb is the same. "The same verb *takṣ*, to fashion, is generally used with reference to the manual skill of the Ṛbhus as that of Tvaṣṭṛ."<sup>51</sup>

From what we can infer about the general theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets, therefore, it is only to be expected that in their view the "working hands" still retain a great deal of glory, and there is no question of these being pushed to the background by the glory of the products of the head—pure wisdom or pure reason as conceived by the Upaniṣadic idealists. Vedic mythology satisfies this expectation.

Macdonell notes<sup>52</sup> that Vedic poets take no special care to describe the physical features of Tvaṣṭṛ and the Ṛbhus. But there is a significant exception to this. The poets do take special care in describing the glory of their working hands. Thus we are repeatedly told that Tvaṣṭṛ has wonderful hands: he is *supāṇi* (III.54.12; VII.34.20; VI.49.9), he is *suhastā* (VII.35.12), he is *sugabhastī* (VI.49.9)—all referring to the dexterity of his hands. Sometimes these adjectives are repeated in the same verse, evidently for placing special emphasis on this feature of the god. The same is true of the Ṛbhus. The praise of their working hands is about the only important aspect of their physical feature that we read in the *R̥gveda*.<sup>53</sup>

As if to make their own attitude to manual labour fully clear, the poets tell us that some of the great Vedic gods share this glory of Tvaṣṭṛ and the Ṛbhus. Excellent working hands are also possessed by Mitra and Varuṇa,<sup>54</sup>

Indra,<sup>55</sup> Agni,<sup>56</sup> Savitr<sup>57</sup> and others. One of the lesser poets of the later period, described as the son of the female poet Ghoṣā already quoted, has the name Suhastya, 'one with dextrous hands'. In the poem attributed to him (X.41), he praises his own working hands (X.41.3) evidently in imitation of the gods.

Such then are the ancient conditions as remembered by the Vedic literature. In the later Vedic period, however, things are strikingly different. In the words of Engels<sup>58</sup>

" . . . the more modest productions of the working hands retreated into the background, the more so since the mind that planned the labour was able, at a very early stage of the development of society, to have the labour that had been planned carried out by other hands than its own. All merit for the swift advance of civilization was ascribed to the mind, to the development and activity of the brain. Men became accustomed to explain their actions as arising out of thoughts instead of their needs; and so in the course of time there emerged that idealistic outlook on the world which, specially since the fall of the world of antiquity, has dominated men's minds. It still rules them."

This brings us to the Upaniṣadic period—the period in which, along with the new norm of living on the surplus produced by the labour of others, there emerges the cult of secret wisdom, supposed to be the possession of a fortunate few of the times. This wisdom, completely cut off from action, develops a sense of delusional omnipotence of its own: it wants to dictate terms to reality and to be recognised as the only reality.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Haraprasāda Rucanāvalī* (in Bengali), Calcutta 1960, Vol. ii, pp. 389ff. This remarkable paper remains yet to be translated from Bengali.

<sup>2</sup> G. Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*, Vol. i, London 1949, p. 440.

<sup>3</sup> J. Eggeling in *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. xii, Introduction pp. ix-x.

<sup>4</sup> To the evidences mentioned by me in my *Indian Philosophy*, New Delhi 1964, pp. 87ff, the following may be added:

*Gautama* x.5: Agriculture and trade are also lawful for a Brahmin *provided he does not do the work himself*.

*Gautama* xvii.7: A Brahmin may eat the food given by a trader *who is not at the same time an artisan*.

*Manu* x.99-100: But a *śūdra* being unable to find service with the twice-born and threatened with the loss of his sons and wife, may maintain himself by handicrafts. Let him follow those mechanical occupations and those various practical arts by following which he can best serve the twice-born.

<sup>5</sup> *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* vii.29. This may be read along with the typical *dharmaśāstra* passages defining the cultural and economic status of the *śūdra*-s:

*Gautama* xii.4-7: Now if he listens intentionally to a recitation of the Veda, his ears shall be filled with molten tin or lac. If he recites Vedic texts, his tongue shall be cut out. If he remembers them, his body shall be split in twain. If he assumes a position equal to that of the twice-born in sitting, lying down, in conversation or on the road, he shall undergo corporal punishment.



## SOURCES OF IDEALISM

*Gautama* x.50: The *śūdra* belongs to the fourth caste, which has one birth only. For him also are prescribed truthfulness, meekness and purity. He shall use the cast-off shoes, umbrellas, garments and mats of the higher castes and eat the remnants of their food, and live by practising mechanical arts.

*Manu* x.129: No collection of wealth must be made by a *śūdra*, even though he be able to do it; for a *śūdra* who has acquired wealth gives pain to a Brahmin.

<sup>1</sup> I have tried to go into some details of this in the paper presented in honour of Professor Sushobhan Sarkar (in press).

<sup>2</sup> B. Farrington, *Greek Science* (Penguin 1963 ed), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> K. Abraham (*The Psycho-Sexual Differences Between Hysteria and Dementia Praecox*, 1908) starts this line of analysis in recent psychology.

<sup>4</sup> The most outstanding Upaniṣadic philosopher representing this line of thought is Uddālaka Ārṇi (*Ghāndogya Upaniṣad* vi). See particularly W. Ruben, *Studies in Ancient Indian Thought*, Calcutta 1966, pp. 77ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Ch. Up.* vii.1.1-4; *Māṇḍ. Up.* i.1.5. The most dreadful feature of this is the contempt for medical science. See *Manu* iii.152; iii.180; iv.212; iv.220 etc. Interestingly, the Aśvins—the greatest of the physician-gods of the *Rgveda* (i.57.6; viii.18.8; viii.86.1; x.39; viii.9.6 & 15; etc. etc.)—require in the *Bṛāhmana* period ritual purification for their medical past: see *Sat. Br.* iv.1.5.1ff. This changed attitude to medical science is traceable to the *Yajurveda*: *Tait. Saṃ.* vi.4.9; *Mait. Saṃ.* iv.6.2.

<sup>6</sup> R. E. Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upanisads*, Oxford University Press, 1951 ed., pp. 58-59.  
<sup>7</sup> *JAOS.* 1929, pp. 97ff.

<sup>8</sup> A. A. Macdonell & A. B. Keith, *Vedic Index*, London 1958, iii.422; Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda*, Harvard 1925, p. 497.

<sup>9</sup> Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*... p. 493.

<sup>10</sup> *Vedic Index* i.206.

<sup>11</sup> *Br. Up.* ii.4; iv.5.

<sup>12</sup> This is a persistent theme of practically all the principal Upaniṣads—*Ait. Up.* iv.6; v.4; *Kaus. Up.* ii.14; *Keuś Up.* xii; *Ch.* i.4.5; *Br. Up.* ii.4.3; etc; *Isa Up.* xi; *Maitri Up.* vii.9; *Svet. Up.* iii.7; *Mund. Up.* ii.2.11; *Kaṭha Up.* vi.8; vi.18; *Pras. Up.* iii. 11-12; etc. etc.

<sup>13</sup> *Rv.* i.43.9; i.84.4; viii.48.12; ix.3.1; etc. etc.

<sup>14</sup> The songs in praise of gifts (*dāna-stuti*-s) are very late and do not prove a vastly propertied class in the early Vedic period.

<sup>15</sup> D. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata*, New Delhi 1959, Ch. viii.

<sup>16</sup> *Ib.* p. 565ff.

<sup>17</sup> *Gautama* x.29-30.

<sup>18</sup> *Br. Up.* iv.1.1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.* iv.2.4.

<sup>20</sup> *Sat. Br.* xi.6.3.2; *Br. Up.* iii. 1.2.

<sup>21</sup> *Br. Up.* iii.9.28.

<sup>22</sup> *Ib.* iv.1.3; iv.1.5; iv.1.6; iv.1.7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ib.* iv.3.14; iv.3.15; iv.3.16; iv.4.7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ch. Up.* iv.4.5-iv.5.1.

<sup>25</sup> *Vedic Index* i.100.

<sup>26</sup> *Ch. Up.* iv.2.3; cf. *Kaus.* ii.1 & ii.2.

<sup>27</sup> N. Wagle, *Society at the Times of the Buddha*, Bombay 1946, pp. 18-19.

<sup>28</sup> *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* Tr. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. ii, Oxford 1923, p. 130.

<sup>29</sup> Rhys Davids, *ib.* 129.

<sup>30</sup> Plato, *Phaedo* 66, Tr. H. Cary (Everyman's Library).

<sup>31</sup> *Br. Up.* iv.4.2.

<sup>32</sup> *Rv.* i.187.

<sup>33</sup> D. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata*, Ch. viii.

<sup>34</sup> *Rv.* i.38.14.

<sup>35</sup> *Rv.* x.119.

<sup>36</sup> *Vedic Index*, i.297 & 302.

<sup>37</sup> G. Vlastos, Quoted by B. Farrington in *Philosophy for the Future*, New York 1949, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> B. Farrington, *ib.* p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> *Rv.* vii.13.6; viii.3.9; viii.6.18; etc.

<sup>40</sup> A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Strassburg 1897, pp. 151-32.

<sup>41</sup> *Bṛhaddevatā* iii.83-88. Tr. Macdonell.



## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

<sup>47</sup> Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* p. 116: Rv. x.8 describes Indra decapitating the three-headed son of Tvastṛ while an Indus seal depicts somebody with three heads. These are about the only solid evidences for D. D. Kosambi's strange conjecture that Tvastṛ is originally an Indus priest (or deity?). In defence of this conjecture, it is necessary not only to depend on a large number of further assumptions but moreover to overlook many positive evidences of the Vedic literature.

<sup>48</sup> Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 116.

<sup>49</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ib.* 117.

<sup>51</sup> *Ib.* 132.

<sup>52</sup> *Ib.* 116 & 131.

<sup>53</sup> Rv. iv.33.8; iv.35.3; iv.35.9; v.42.12; x.66.10.

<sup>54</sup> Rv. i.71.9; iii.56.7; iii.57.2

<sup>55</sup> Rv. iii.33.6.

<sup>56</sup> Rv. i.109.4.

<sup>57</sup> Rv. vii.55.4.

<sup>58</sup> F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, Moscow 1964 ed., p. 180.

# Origin Myths and The Early Indian Historical Tradition

ROMILA THAPAR

THE organisation of a historical tradition revolves around two related components—the purpose of action and the agency of action. Both of these are implicitly present irrespective of the form which the tradition may take, whether it is expressed as a myth or as a historical narrative. These components are by no means of equal importance but an element at least of each resides in all historical traditions. By the purpose of action is meant that the recording of what is believed to be history has an aim, either to moralise as was often the case with traditional historical writing or else to explain why and how past events happened, as is frequently the case with modern historiography. The agency of action is ultimately human (even if sometimes claimed to be divinely inspired); but it is of interest to discover which group of men are regarded as the actors in history and to what extent they function independently of any other agency, as for example, the gods.

Past events have to be related in a chronological order, but the time sequence can be part of a much larger concept of time. Events concerning the more remote periods often take the form of a myth. Myth is in a sense a proto-type history since it is a selection of ideas composed in narrative form for the purpose of preserving and giving significance to an important aspect of the past. Although myths cannot be used as descriptive sources of the past, their analysis can reveal the more emphatic assumptions of a society. Myths record what a people like to think about their past, and to that extent even some modern histories are not always free from an element of myth-making.

*Mythos* is defined as an “utterance”, often a tale recited in association with a religious ceremony. In that sense the narratives of the Puranic tradition were myths, since the *ākhyāna* was recited on ritual occasions and the *purāṇa* is explained as relating to ancient lore which would tend to be preserved in

mythical form. The myth involved archetypal or elemental characters, themes and symbols. It may be differentiated from the folk-tale by its focus on the 'grand events' of the past—the creation of the world, the origin of man and of the gods, the justification of kingship—whereas the folk-tale is concerned with more restricted social preoccupations generally not involving any grand designs.

The interpretation of myths has resulted in diverse explanations.<sup>1</sup> Early interpreters saw in them symbols of natural phenomena and most myths were nature myths.<sup>2</sup> Others tried to see them as attempts at explaining the real world but couched in symbolic form.<sup>3</sup> Another view held that myths had an intrinsic relationship with ritual and could only be explained in terms of ritual origins, a view which conjured up the world of Frazer's *Golden Bough*.<sup>4</sup> A major re-orientation came about with Malinowski's view that myths were essentially charters of validation in which the aim was very often to provide a sanction for current situations.<sup>5</sup> This analysis encouraged an interest in the social under-pinnings of myth. The notion of myth as charter was reconsidered later when the emphasis shifted to the structural study of myth and the relation of this to the structural study of society.<sup>6</sup> The notion of myth as an archetype and as a primary cultural force has also remained a dominant trend.<sup>7</sup> Partially associated with this is the theory of Mircea Eliade that myths reflect a nostalgia for the origins of human society and try to evoke a return to a creative era.<sup>8</sup> More recently it has been suggested that myths are connected with liminality and arise in transitional situations, thus explaining how one state of affairs became another, or how things came to be what they are.<sup>9</sup> Specific to Indo-European mythology have been the attempts of Georges Dumézil to analyse these myths on the basis of the 'tripartite ideology', a pattern which even for Vedic myths is not always beyond question.<sup>10</sup>

This brief survey of the possible range of paradigms which can provide interpretations of myths is not an attempt to establish any priorities of interpretation. It is provided only to emphasise that, in choosing to limit this study to origin-myths and that too in the context of the *ītiḥāsa-purāṇa* and related historical tradition, there will implicitly be a delimiting of the range of interpretation.

Myth is at one level a straightforward story, a narrative: at another level it reflects the integrating values around which societies are organised.<sup>11</sup> It codifies belief, safeguards morality, vouches for the efficiency of the ritual and provides social norms. It is a rationalisation of man's activity in the past, although the expression may take on non-rational forms. It remains socially important as long as it is a charter of belief, but becomes ineffective when seen as a myth. As a charter of belief it serves to protect cultural continuity

and provides through its theme a point of cultural equilibrium. In a historical tradition, therefore, the themes of myths act as factors of continuity.

The analysis of the structure of a myth can reveal (to a lesser or greater extent) the structure of the society from which it emanates. The analysis may centre on one of two perspectives: either the sequence and the order of events or the schemata and organisation of the sequences at different levels. Ultimately the myth is concerned with the quest for understanding the significance of nature and culture. The action of the myth is usually the narration of sacred history which is believed to be a true event which has taken place in the past. Since these primordial events are often associated with supernatural beings, they also tend to take on the character of models for action and for ritual. Most myths being explanatory (whether explicitly stated as such or not) they are related to the origin or the commencement of a particular event or action. Myths made the past intelligible and meaningful, but it was an intelligibility and meaningfulness which related to the present, for the continuity of myth is largely with reference to the present.

In societies (and this would include most pre-modern societies) where the oral tradition rather than the use of literature is the more functional means of communication on a large scale, myths become one of the means of passing on information. There is, therefore, a process of constant adjustment, and myths from earlier periods are recast in conformity with the social assumptions of later periods. The repetition of the same myth, with perhaps some modifications, from age to age is partly to ensure 'the message' getting through and partly to indicate new nuances. Myths, therefore, have a widely over-arching relationship to all aspects of society and each major myth could be the subject of an expansive analysis. The attempt here is not to provide a complete analysis of each myth, but to recognise and point up the historically significant aspects of certain myths i.e., those aspects which had some role in the propagation and continuity of the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition and its main concerns. But this is not to deny that even within those aspects there may well be other layers touching on different facets of early Indian society. Further, the attempt is not to ascertain the historical authenticity of the myth, but rather to probe the reason for its acceptance, inasmuch as it relates to social validation. As validating charters myths have a close connection with social organisation not only representing, as they do, the assumptions about the past, but also under-pinning the social relationships of the present.

The myths which are the most closely related to the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition are available in the core of the tradition, that is, the genealogical sections *vaṃśānucarita* of the major *Purāṇas*. A variant of these may be seen from the somewhat different perspective of the Buddhist historical tradition, the sources for which have to be culled from various texts. These will form

our primary sources. In both cases the earliest occasion for the recital of these myths would be in association with rituals and ceremonies. The *Purāṇa* was recited over a period of many days in connection with a religious ceremony. The genealogical sections in particular were preserved by the *sūta* and the *māgadha*, the professional bards and chroniclers, who recited them in association with the epics and the heroic ballads at royal courts. In the Buddhist case too the literature would initially be preserved as part of the oral tradition of monastic centres. This does not however imply that there was any integral co-relation between the ritual and the purpose of the myth. It seems more likely that the association with ritual occasions would serve to heighten the importance of what the myth was meant to convey, for with the compilation of the texts in a literary form, making them accessible to literate members of society, the association with ritual perceptibly weakens. The texts referred to above were in the main compiled and edited by about the middle of the first millennium A.D., but earlier versions of the myths and narrative stereotypes are known from earlier texts, some of which go back to the first millennium B.C. There was, therefore, both time and incentive to reorganise the narrative and the symbols of the myths for changing social contexts. The texts drew in the main from the earlier oral tradition and were transferred to a written form in the first millennium A.D. In spite of this the *Purāṇas* were frequently treated as part of the oral tradition with the reciting of the texts to large audiences. Both categories of sources came into prominence during the period when Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism, in addition to their religious role, were performing the function of being agencies of acculturation for those for whom the Great Tradition had hitherto been inaccessible. Such texts reflected the social concerns of the present, even though they treated of the social concerns of the past. The significance of this lies in the fact that it is also by the mid-first millennium A.D. (and in later centuries) that these texts—and the *vaṃśānucarita* section of the *Purāṇas* in particular—are used for the more secular purpose of providing lineage links and genealogical connections for the families which gave rise to the multiple dynasties of the time.

In a historical tradition, origin myths play a crucial role as they provide a point of commencement. In the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition the origin myth referred to or implied is that of the Flood. It occurs first in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and is found again in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*, there being a substantial difference of time between the first and the last version.<sup>12</sup> The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* version relates that Manu, the primeval man, was performing his morning ablutions when a fish came into his hands. It asked to be reared and protected and promised Manu safety from the deluge in return, explaining to Manu that the gods had decided to punish mankind by unleash-

ing a massive flood to destroy all creation. The fish grew larger in time. On the eve of the flood it commanded Manu to build a ship for himself, in which Manu escaped from the flood. The ship was tied to the fish who swam through the waters and lodged it on the northern mountain. When the water subsided, it glided down the mountain slope and returned Manu to Jambudvīpa. Manu being alone and desirous of sons performed a sacrifice to the gods from which a woman was born as a result of which she was called Idā (or Ilā in other versions). Through her Manu generated this race.

The story is repeated in some of the *Purāṇas* but with certain significant additions. In the *Matsya Purāṇa* the fish is described as an incarnation of Viṣṇu—the *Matsya-avatāra*. Ilā is a hermaphrodite hence called by the cognate Ila-Ilā and is the progenitor of one of the two royal lineages, the Candra-vamśa or lunar lineage. Manu's eldest son Ikṣvāku was the progenitor of the Sūryavamśa or solar lineage. In some texts, however, the male Ila is referred to as the eldest son who was inadvertently changed into a woman, Ilā. To these lineages belonged all those who came to be regarded as legitimate *kṣatriyas*. Manu being the originator of the lineages framed the rules and laws of government and collected one-sixth of the produce of the land as tax. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* omits the story of the flood in the *vaṃśānucarita* section but refers to the birth of Ilā as the daughter of Manu and states that through the goodwill of the gods she was able to switch her form from female to male and back as occasion demanded.<sup>13</sup>

The flood assumes the primary precondition of water out of which the known creation arises. The great flood caused the total destruction of the world and this is a recognised stage in the cycle of time concept, what Eliade would call the abolition of profane time.<sup>14</sup> The beginnings of history therefore emerge from a condition which has no antecedents: it is in fact symbolic of the very beginning. However the negation of antecedents is not absolutely total, since Manu is not created out of the flood but exists prior to it. Further creation follows from the flood. Repetition occurs frequently in myths of renewal, such as the story of the flood, and in such cases the abolition of profane time is a marker separating mythical time from historical time. The latter emerges from a condition of renewal where the vestiges of the old have been destroyed.

The choice of the fish as the saviour is obvious since the fish alone could survive in the flood and this is used to good effect in the Puranic version where it is referred to as the *Matsya-avatāra*. The myth is brought into service as a means of exalting the deity Viṣṇu and introducing him into what was an old and well-established myth through the mechanism of the *avatāra*. This endows *Viṣṇu* with antiquity and enhances his image as the deity who was willing to take on the lowly form of the fish in order to save man. It

might be worth mentioning in passing that the Sumerian god Enki, who in the Sumerian version of the flood myth saved Ziusudra, the Sumerian counterpart of Manu, is often represented as a fish in later Mesopotamian mythology, in which capacity he acts as a saviour deity.<sup>15</sup>

That Manu procreates through his daughter possibly reflects a patrilineal emphasis known from other myths of such societies where an incestuous relationship also occurs in origin myths.<sup>16</sup> More plausibly it may indicate the symbolic insistence on the purity of lineage, that ultimately the mother-father of the founders of the lineages was the child of Manu and created from a sacrifice. The derivation of the Candravamśa lineage from a hermaphrodite suggests a variation on the idea of twins or siblings as parents, stressing again the purity of lineage. It is significant that in the widely accepted description of the Utopia, the land of the Uttara Kurus, people are born as couples, thus eliminating the need for physical procreation.<sup>17</sup> The *Purāṇas* repeat the idea in the story of the evolution of society where it is said that Brahmnā created the earth and then four sets of human beings each consisting of a thousand couples.<sup>18</sup> Life was idyllic and easy. But this did not last, for ultimately decay set in together with the emergence of the four *varṇas* and a general falling off from the utopian beginnings. Yet in a late section of the *R̥g Veda* the theme of rejecting sibling incest is associated with the god of death, Yama and his sister Yamī, suggesting that the idea was being questioned by some.<sup>19</sup> However, in *Purāṇic* sources Yama is sometimes contrasted with Manu (associated with life) both being sons of Vivasvat.<sup>20</sup> That one of the royal lineages was born from a female form was obviously rather galling in later times when women were of low social status and on par with the *śūdras*. This is sought to be explained away in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* by the statement that during the course of the sacrificial ritual there was an inaccuracy, and although Manu had been performing the sacrifice for the obtaining of sons, a daughter was born.<sup>21</sup> The situation was retrieved somewhat by Mitra and Varuṇa permitting the daughter to become a hermaphrodite. In actual fact the male-female distinction was necessary for the purpose of the myth and was required as a distinguishing feature of the two lineages.

In terms of the bi-polarity of symbols, the lineages were separated by the one being associated with the sun and the other with the moon.<sup>22</sup> Evidently the lineages had to be kept distinct. This is evident from the structure of the lineages for the two groups. The Candravamśi or Aila appears to be a segmentary lineage system where each male child and his male progeny is treated as a separate segment of the lineage and the descent group of each is recorded.<sup>23</sup> Such a record inevitably covers a wide geographical area—central, western, northern and parts of eastern India. The Suryavamśi or Ikṣvāku lineage on the other hand records only the descent by

primogeniture of a few lines and is far more limited in area as well, being confined chiefly to the middle Ganges valley. The difference in the structure of lineages may also indicate the more sedentary settlement of the Ikṣvāku as against a society more given to migrating groups among the Aila.

The choice of the two lineage names, the Sun and the Moon are significant as the dominant planetary pair. Perhaps the myth refers to a belief in an early division into moieties of the tribes or two rival groups. Alternatively it could have been an attempt at orderliness on the part of the compilers of the *Purāṇas*, to weave the many dynastic strands into two main currents and finally to a single origin. It is not surprising that the word *Manu* provided the generic base for *mānava* meaning mankind.

The variation between the early and later version of the myth as in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the *Purāṇas* shows the manner in which it was used for two purposes pertinent to the new concerns of the later period. The readjustment of the myth to Vaiṣṇava religious purposes is self-evident in the idea of the *Matsya-avatāra*. The latching on of one of the two royal lineages to Ilā-Ilā and Ikṣvāku, the children of *Manu*, and thereby indirectly to the flood story, was an effective means of giving both antiquity and prestige to the lineages. The historically attested dynasties from the fourth century B.C. onwards appear to have had little interest in proclaiming their lineage origins. The concern with lineage and genealogical connections involving either the Sūryavaṃśa or the Candravaṃśa are more marked in the early centuries A.D. and become quite obsessive in some parts of India after the mid-first millennium A.D. This concern may have necessitated the adaptation of earlier myths to new interests. Information on what was believed to be the 'history' of the lineages would have been preserved as part of the oral tradition by the *sūta* and the *māgadha*. It is believed that this oral tradition was taken over, probably by priestly authors, in the process of the compiling of the *Purāṇas*, some of which date to the middle of the first millennium A.D.<sup>24</sup> The neat arrangement of the lineages and their segments could well have been worked out in the process of adjusting the earlier myth and the new version would then provide the validation for the new lineage connections. The reference to *Manu* framing the laws and collecting the tax would have underlined the legitimacy of these two functions for those who were the descendants of *Manu*.

Curiously there is a striking parallel to this in the Mesopotamian tradition. The story of the flood from Sumerian texts is remarkably similar to the version of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in its details. Deluge myths as the genesis of cultures are by no means rare. What is of interest however is the particulars in which the versions seem to agree. It is now well-known that the Sumerian myth found its way via the Babylonian version into the Bible



as the story of Noah's arc.<sup>28</sup> It has also been argued that the Greek version in which Zeus sends a flood to punish mankind and the survivor from the flood is Deucalion, the son of Prometheus (or in later versions Ogygus), is a myth derived from the Mesopotamian original, since the occurrence of the flood and the attitude of the gods towards man are not in keeping with the Greek stereotypes regarding natural calamities and the deities.<sup>29</sup> The Sumerian flood myth is sometimes associated with the archaeological evidence of the massive flooding of a group of cities in the delta of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, an event generally dated to the end of the fourth millennium B.C.<sup>30</sup> Is it possible that the Sumerian myth found its way to the Harappans and via the Harappans entered the Vedic tradition? What is even more curious is that in the late third millennium B.C. the Sumerian flood myth is worked into the story of the king-lists of ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>31</sup> These refer to the mythical seven pre-deluvian kings, then the coming of the flood and the survivor who is associated with the descent of kingship onto various cities of ancient Mesopotamia. Indian sources also refer in sequence to the seven pre-deluvian Manus, the flood and then the royal lineages which succeeded. It would seem that the Mesopotamians made the same use of their earlier Sumerian flood myth as did the Indians in searching for an earlier sanction to an existing situation of a later period.

The genealogical sections of the *Purāṇas* with their recital of king-lists and descent groups are punctuated with myths relating to the supposedly more important personalities. The narration of the Candravamśi lineage in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is a case in point and is interspersed with stories. This was in part a mnemonic device as well as an attempt to embellish the otherwise rather dry narration of lists of succession. What is more important from our point of view is the fact that the two ancestral figures from whom the main Candravamśi lineage segments trace their origin—Purūravas and of a later generation, Yayāti—are in each case introduced through a well-known and frequently repeated myth.<sup>32</sup> Purūravas has the female Ilā as his mother and Soma, the moon-god as his grandfather. That his descendants were the progeny of Soma would further strengthen the nomenclature of Candravamśa. This idea is echoed in at least one Candravamśi royal family of the early medieval period, the Candella, who claim the moon-god as one of their original ancestors.<sup>33</sup>

The legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī is related in full, following in detail the version earlier recorded in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in preference to the variant in the *Mahābhārata*. The earliest version of the myth in the *Rg Veda* reads as an inversion of the Cupid and Psyche story.<sup>34</sup> The king Purūravas falls in love with the *apsarā* Urvaśī who has been banished to earth for a temporary period. She agrees to live with him on condition that

she should never see him in the nude. After some time the Gandharvas decide to call her back to the celestial regions and arrange one night for her pet rams to be stolen. As Purūravas rushes after the thief there is a flash of lightning which reveals him in his nudity to Urvaśī, whereupon she vanishes. The distraught king wanders for many years in search of her and eventually finds her. She does not return to him but does bear him a son. The Ṛgvedic version appears to be incomplete and there may have been more to the story. In the version recorded in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Purūravas is anxious to join the Gandharvas and thereby live permanently with Urvaśī.<sup>32</sup> The Gandharvas require him to kindle three fires and perform some sacrifices, after which he is accepted into their world. In the *Mahābhārata* the king is killed by the brāhmaṇas whom he disturbs during their sacrificial rituals.<sup>33</sup>

The myth has in the past been interpreted as a solar myth with Purūravas representing the sun and Urvaśī the vanishing dawn.<sup>34</sup> A more plausible interpretation suggests that the latter two versions are mythological variants of each other, the significance of the action being that Purūravas is being sacrificed.<sup>35</sup> The sacrifice of the male, symbolised by his kindling three fires and then being taken to the world of the Gandharvas, was associated with certain matriarchal, mother-goddess cults. The myth therefore would represent the transitional phase to patrilineal society. It is further argued that Purūravas having a hermaphrodite parent is not only an attempt to link him with Manu via Ilā, but is also indicative of a transition to a patrilineal society from an earlier matrilineal one. But as we have seen, the symbolism of a hermaphrodite does not necessarily indicate such a transition. The repeated occurrence of the myth in a variety of texts points to the mythological significance attached to Purūravas as the founder of the Candravamśī lineage. Its occurrence in a lineage-context as well gives added status to the descent of Purūravas' progeny from an *apsarā*. Of the many sons whom Urvaśī bore Purūravas, two received particular attention. The eldest was Āyus through whom the main lineages of the Candravamśī descended; and the other was Amavasū whose line included Paraśurāma, the destroyer of the *kṣatriyas*, suggesting thereby a balancing of lineages.

Of Purūravas' sons the main lineage goes via the eldest son Āyus to his eldest son Nahuṣa whose eldest son Yati declined the throne whereupon it went to his younger brother Yayāti, the emphasis being on primogeniture. At this point there is the famous myth of Yayāti, who in old age seeks to exchange his years for the youth of one of his sons.<sup>36</sup> He asks each one in turn starting with the eldest Yadu, who refuses, as indeed do each of the other three, Druhyu, Turvaśa and Anu. The latter three are cursed by Yayāti with the statement that none of their progeny shall possess dominion. The youngest Puru, readily agrees to the request of his father and takes upon

himself his old age. Ultimately, after many years when Yayāti is exhausted with his youth he accepts back his old age from Puru. Before dying he appoints Puru as his successor and gives him sovereignty over the main kingdom, the *madhya-deśa* (in the main the Ganga-Yamuna doāb), which should otherwise by right have gone to Yadu. The eldest son Yadu is sent to the territories to the south and south-west of the *madhya-deśa*, and the other three to the south-east, the west and the north. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* states that Puru was made the supreme monarch of the earth and his brothers governed as viceroys.<sup>37</sup> The *Mahābhārata* has an elaborate version of the myth and explains further that from Yadu there descended the Yādavas, the Turvaśa produced the Yavanas, the Druhyu produced the Bhojas and the Anu a variety of *mleccha* peoples, i.e., those regarded as socially inferior.<sup>38</sup> This version takes the story further involving Yayāti's attempt to enter heaven.

The Yayāti myth has been the subject of a lengthy analysis in which the emphasis has been on an explanation of the symbolism of not only the youth-age syndrome associated with the Yayāti-Puru relationship, but also the expression of values such as valour, sacrifice, riches and above all truth.<sup>39</sup> A more narrow interpretation linked to the requirements of the historical tradition indicates two obvious emphases. First, the myth explains the lack of observance of the rule of primogeniture where the eldest son is sent to a distant area and the youngest son succeeds to the throne. Secondly it highlights the supremacy of the Puru lineage as being the superior one among the *kṣatriyas*, since Puru inherits the sovereignty. The Druhyu, Turvaśa and Anu lineages tend to die out or else get merged with the Puru and this takes care, genealogically, of an otherwise impossibly wide distribution of descendants. Significantly the superiority of the Pūru lineage is contrasted with the low status of the others where in the *Mahābhārata* as we have seen they are regarded as *mlecchas*. The Yayāti myth also provides an explanation for why non-*kṣatriya* groups are not recorded in the genealogies. Subsequent to this myth the narrative of the Candravamśi lineage becomes substantially that of the descendants of Yadu and Puru. In a sense the events of the *Mahābhārata* war suggest a kind of reversal of the relationship between these two descent groups, where it is the offspring of Puru who seeks the help of the offspring of Yadu and the latter plays the dominant role. The myth also serves to explain the migration and settlement of tribes. The Purus in Vedic literature are associated with the Sarasvatī region and the Punjab.<sup>40</sup> The Yayāti myth would account for a possible migration into the *madhya-deśa* and perhaps the reorganising of the settlement in that area. Similarly the Yadus are also associated with the Punjab and their appearance in western India would have to be explained.<sup>41</sup>

The emphasis on primogeniture is continually underlined in many texts. This, after all, is the crux of the events which form the core of the two epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Where the law is not observed, the breaking of the law has to be justified. This is clearly set out in an earlier section of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* in the myth of Pṛthu the son of Veṇa, a myth which also occurs in other texts.<sup>42</sup> We are told that among the early kings of the earth was Veṇa who obstructed the sacrifices. His opposition to the Vedic *sūtras* and *yajñas* provoked the antagonism of the ṛṣis who put him to death by piercing him with stalks of the *kuśa* grass. In the absence of a king there was now a threat of total anarchy. So the ṛṣis churned the left thigh of Veṇa and there sprang up a short, dark, ugly man whom they called Niṣāda, a name derived from the command of the ṛṣis who told him to 'sit down', (*ni-ṣīda*). The ṛṣis were unhappy with what they had produced; so they banished him and he became the ancestor of all the *mlecchas* and the wild tribes such as the Kirāta, Pulinda and Śabara. The ṛṣis then churned the right arm of Veṇa and there sprang up a beautiful man whom they called Pṛthu (the broad or expansive one). He was righteous in his manners, introduced cattle-rearing and the plough, and his reign was so prosperous that the earth was named Pṛthvi in memory of him.

The wickedness of Veṇa is ascribed to the usual reason that he objected to the teachings of the Vedas. It is significant that he can only be put to death by the ṛṣis who alone have the power to assassinate kings. His death is caused by the *kuśa* grass used in the sacred rituals of Vedic ceremonies. The fear of revolt against and assassination of legitimate kings is evident from the fear of resulting anarchy. This sentiment is in conformity with the concept of *mātsyanyāya* as explained in the *Mahābhārata* where, in a condition of anarchy, the large fish devour the small fish.<sup>43</sup> The legitimacy of succession has to be maintained by producing a successor out of the body of Veṇa. It is the left side of Veṇa which produces the ungainly, primitive successor who has to be exiled, and the right side which produces the appropriate successor, conforming to the symbolism of the left being impure and the right, pure. The association of Niṣāda with the wild tribes, food-gatherers perhaps, is juxtaposed with the introduction of agriculture by Pṛthu, and it is through the latter that the earth prospers. That the elder son was banished in favour of the younger could only be justified by pointing to the inadequacies of the elder. The contrast however is so extreme that one almost suspects an association of guilt with the usurpation by the younger son. Could this myth have symbolised the overpowering of the legitimately settled food-gathering cultures by the agriculturalists, in a period which saw the gradual encroaching of agriculture into new lands via the grants of land to religious donees and secular officials, where the former cultures from henceforth would

always be associated with the dark and the ugly, and the latter with that which is beautiful and prosperous? Vedic sources mention Niṣāda and Pṛthu but in unrelated contexts. Niṣāda appears to have been the general term used for non-Aryan tribes and Pṛthu was the first of kings and associated with the invention of agriculture.<sup>44</sup> It is from the sacrifice performed at the birth of Pṛthu that there emerged the *sūta* and the *māgadha* who are told that their function is to eulogise the king and praise his actions.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps historical consciousness (to the extent that this is embodied in bards and chroniclers) was believed to coincide with the development of agricultural society.

Another myth relating directly to primogeniture occurs at a later stage in the Candravamśi lineage, in connection with the brothers Devāpi and Śāntanu of the Puru lineage.<sup>46</sup> For twelve years there has been a drought in the kingdom and this is explained as due to Śāntanu, the younger brother, ruling in place of the elder Devāpi who has gone into the forest. The situation can be righted only if Devāpi can be brought back. When Śāntanu's minister hears this he despatches some heretics to the forest who instruct Devāpi in anti-Vedic doctrines. This annoys the Brāhmaṇas who declare that Devāpi is degraded and unfit to rule, whereupon there is rain. Earlier versions of the myth in the *R̥gveda* and *Nirukta* attribute the supersession of the elder brother to his becoming an ascetic, or his suffering from a skin disease, both perfectly legitimate reasons for supersession.<sup>47</sup> In these versions Devāpi rejects the throne when offered to him and performs a ritual which results in rain. In the Purāṇic version the Vedic story is readjusted so as to highlight the importance of primogeniture.

Myths emphasising primogeniture are relatively rare in the Sūryavamśi sections of the genealogies, for these record descent only of the eldest son or the legitimate successor. In the Candravamśi lineage the stress on primogeniture was required from time to time so that the senior descent group in the segmentary system could be clearly demarcated. Where the procedure was reversed it had to be explained. The myth would serve both to legitimise a junior line which might have become more powerful, as is suggested by the Yayāti myth, as also to ensure that, technically at least, the core kingdoms remained with the 'senior' lineages.

Mythology in the Buddhist sources relates essentially to two main areas, origin myths of tribes and places and the legend about the life of the Buddha. In later Buddhist texts there are myths connected with the Theras and the Saṃgha but these are often derivatives of the earlier myths. The earlier myths tend to be fairly traditional and are often borrowings from the Purāṇic tradition or else come from a common source of myths which supplied both the Purāṇic and the Buddhist texts. What is of interest are the similarities in

the origin myths as recorded in the two traditions as well as the deviations.

The most important of the tribes is of course that of the Śākya to which the Buddha belonged. The Śākya are traced back to the Ikṣvāku lineage or the Okkaka as it is called in the Pāli sources.<sup>48</sup> In one text we are told that king Okkaka had five sons and four daughters by his chief queen. On her death the king married a young woman who, when she bore the king a son wanted her son to be the heir. The king was persuaded to exile his elder children and the five brothers and four sisters travelled to the Himalayan foothills. Here they met the sage Kapila who advised them to build a city and settle in that region. The city therefore was called Kapilāvastu. The eldest brother remained unmarried and the other four brothers married their four sisters and from them there descended the tribe of the Śākya. The *Mahāvastu*, a text of a later period, has a variation on this, in that there are five brothers and five sisters, the name of the Okkaka king is Sujāta and it is his concubine who wishes her son to be king.<sup>49</sup>

The Śākya had a close relationship with the Koliya according to another version of the origin myth of both.<sup>50</sup> The Śākya in this case consisted of five sisters and four brothers. Since the degradation of the race had to be prevented it was decided to appoint the eldest sister as the mother and the remaining brothers and sisters paired off. The eldest sister developed leprosy and was therefore put into a deep pit in the forest where she was one day threatened by a tiger. She was rescued by Rāma the king of Banaras who had also been exiled because of leprosy but had managed to cure himself. He therefore cured her as well and married her and they lived in a city which they had built. They sent their sons to Kapilāvastu so that they could marry their maternal uncles' daughters. The young men kidnapped the Śākya princesses and were not prevented from doing this, since they were related to the Śākya and the kidnapping was almost customary. It was from these marriages that the Koliya tribe descended and was so called because their city of origin was established at a place where a large *kol* tree was growing. The *Mahāvastu* version states that the princess suffering from leprosy was left in a forest where she was discovered by the royal sage Kola who took her to his hermitage.<sup>51</sup> Sixteen pairs of twin sons were born and were called the Koliya and were sent to Kapilāvastu from where they obtained their brides. The settlement of the Koliya adjoined that of the Śākya and the two were separated by the river Rohiṇī, the waters of which used for irrigation were the cause of dispute between the Śākya and the Koliya.<sup>52</sup>

In a late text the Moriyas (Mauryas) were also associated with the Śākya.<sup>53</sup> They are described as those Śākya who fled from Kapilāvastu when Viṣṇubha the king of Kośala attacked the Śākya for having deceived him into marrying a maid-servant rather than the princess who was promised



to him. This group of Śākya settled in a *pīpal* forest, the Pipphalivana, which abounded in peacocks—*mayura/mora*—from which their name was eventually derived. This appears to have been a later attempt to link Aśoka Maurya with the family of the Buddha.

The origin of the Licchavis again relates them to the royal family of Banaras.<sup>54</sup> The chief queen gave birth to a lump of flesh which was put in a box and floated down the river. It was picked up by a hermit who nurtured its contents until eventually the lump of flesh changed into a twin boy and girl. They had such a translucent beauty that they appeared to have no skin, hence the name, *nicchavi*; or alternatively, everything seemed to get absorbed into them and thus they were called *linacchavi*. Eventually they came to be called Licchavi. The children were adopted by local cowherds but as they proved to be totally undisciplined, they had to be abandoned (*vajjītabba*). An area was demarcated and given over to them and this was called Vajji, an obvious attempt to explain the name of the confederacy of eight clans commonly referred to as the Vṛjji or Vajji confederacy. The boy and girl were married and had sixteen pairs of sibling twins. Since the city in which they lived had to be continually enlarged (*viśālikata*) they came to call it Vesāli/Vaiśāli. The Licchavis were to become a powerful tribe and were the main contenders for the control over the Ganges valley against the kingdom of Magadha. Although defeated at this juncture they continued to maintain their status in the Terai-Nepal area, for not only does Candragupta I make much of his marriage to a Licchavi princess<sup>55</sup> but they also provided an early and important dynasty in Nepal. In some of the later *vaṃśāvalīs* of Nepal the lineage of the Licchavis is not only linked to the Ikṣvākus but the actual descent is given via Raghu, Aja, Daśaratha, eight other kings and then the Licchavis, but the Buddhist origin myth is not repeated.<sup>56</sup>

The origin of the Śākya is related in fuller detail in the biographies of the Buddha from the northern Sanskrit Buddhist texts, some of which have been collated in a Chinese version.<sup>57</sup> This version makes the same points as the earlier one but underlines the emphases more strongly. In the dynasty of the Fish king was born a ruler called Ta-man-tso. Not having a son he became an ascetic and gave his kingdom to his ministers. When he was old and incapable of looking after himself, his disciples, if they had to leave him alone for any length of time, would place him in a basket and hang the basket on a tree. This would safeguard him against wild animals, snakes and the like. One day a hunter shot him by mistake. His disciples full of grief cremated his body. But two drops of blood had fallen from the wound onto the ground. Out of these drops of blood sprang up two stalks of sugarcane (*ikṣū*) which on maturing burst asunder and revealed a boy in one

and a girl in the other. The children were taken to the ministers who agreed to recognise them as the children of the late king. The boy was called Ikṣvāku and Sūryavaṃśa and the girl Subhadrā. They were married and a son Janta was born to them. Ikṣvāku had four sons by a later, second marriage all of whom were fine, manly young men. Subhadrā was now concerned that her son, who was not as attractive, would be overlooked for the succession. She therefore plotted to have the four boys banished. They went into exile and travelled north across the Bhāgīrathī and into the Snowy Mountains, accompanied by their four sisters. They arrived in a beautiful valley where the sage Kapila dwelt and settled there. So as not to pollute their race they married their sisters and founded the city of Kapilāvastu. Because they were able (*śaknoti*) to govern well they came to be called Śākya. The story then continues to trace the descent from the princes to Śuddhodana the father of the Buddha.

This sample of origin myths indicates certain characteristics which provide some clues to social concerns. In each case the myth attempts to explain not only the origin of the tribe but also the city associated with that particular *janapada* or territory where the tribe eventually settled. The inclusion of the city seems to have almost equal importance as indeed the cities of the *janapadas* in the latter part of the first millennium B.C. had considerable political and economic importance. In the *janapadas* with the *saṅgha* or *gaṇa* system of government (i.e. what is generally described as oligarchic government or republics in modern writing on that period), the city was the nucleus of political life and would inevitably be seen as arising almost coterminously with the *janapada*.

The attempt to explain the name of the tribe is a striking feature of these myths if only because the etymologies are so patently false. The survival for example of the extremely farfetched etymology for Licchavi is quite remarkable. It would seem that the original etymology for these names was either forgotten or lost, and clumsy attempts are made in a later period to invent an etymology. This would also account for the variation in the explanation. Thus Śākya is derived from *śaknoti* (to be able), the *śaka* tree and *śakāhi* (with reference to their marrying their sisters). Totem worship may be suggested as a possible explanation but this would be a plausible theory if there had been a consistency of association with a single object in each case.

The selection of tribes whose origin and genealogy are considered worthy of record are invariably those *janas* which had *saṅgha* and *gaṇa* systems of government. These gave prominence to the *kṣatriya* families of the *jana* since they were the ones who had the right to be represented in the *saṅthagāra* or assembly-hall. The *kṣatriya* members of these *janapadas* were frequently interrelated and their territories lay in geographical proximity



to each other. The *kṣatriya* families were again those who were associated with the Buddha, Mahāvīra and other heterodox teachers. None of these origin myths are concerned with the genesis of the neighbouring kingdoms where monarchy prevailed, even though the Buddha after his enlightenment preached more frequently in the kingdoms of Magadha and Kāśī.

The insistence on siblings or even better sibling twins as the procreators of the *jana* is explained in the myths as necessary for maintaining the purity of lineage, where the lineage can be traced back to those of identical blood. Related to this was possibly also the idea that sibling marriages would be the closest simulation to the situation which prevailed in the Uttara-Kuru Utopia, which Utopia was equally acceptable to the Buddhists and to the Brāhmaṇas. Periods of genesis would inevitably be associated with the earliest golden age or Utopia from where the origin myth would begin. The occurrence of the sixteen pairs of twins makes sixteen a rather special number. It may perhaps be explained as a multiple of two ( $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ ) where the base of two would again convey the sense of a twin or couple. The sibling marriage symbolism is so strong that in the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, Rāma and Sītā are described as brother and sister and finally marry each other, a distinctly Buddhist transformation of the *Rāma-kathā*.<sup>58</sup>

The prevalence of cross-cousin marriage would also seem apparent, especially that involving the maternal uncle's daughter. This may reflect an actual social situation or it may be symbolic. In the Chinese account the marriage is not only mentioned but is explained as being prevalent by the pointed reference to there being no objection to it. This might perhaps indicate that in later periods the system of cross-cousin marriage had to be explained or that the audience of this particular text was unfamiliar with the system.

The references to cross-cousin marriage in the Pāli texts and in the epics, *Purāṇas* and other literature, raises the question of the prevalence of the system. These references are a contradiction of the śāstric rules on the observance of *sapinda* and *sagotra* limitations with regard to marriage. Some late *dharma-śāstras* refer to the legitimacy of cross-cousin marriages by quoting a few ambiguous passages from Vedic literature, but far more forcefully by arguing that where it was a customary practice, as for example in the southern regions, in such places it was a permitted relationship even for Brāhmaṇas.<sup>59</sup> It has recently been suggested that the references to cross-cousin marriage in texts pertaining to northern India, may be traces of an earlier Dravidian substratum culture, particularly as the texts appear to have been composed in areas where cross-cousin marriage was the prevalent pattern, as in the case of the Pāli canon edited and compiled in Ceylon.<sup>60</sup> That the acceptability of the system was doubted in cases other than those occurring in the

Buddhist texts, is evident from the attempt either to find an explanation for it or to treat it somewhat contemptuously.<sup>61</sup> In such cases the reference to cross-cousin marriage may well be a memory of an earlier social custom which gave way later, under the powerful impact of Indo-Aryan social structure to the *sapinda* and *sagotra* observances, at least among the élite groups of northern India.

In the Buddhist tradition however there appears to be more than either the memory of a substratum culture or the influence of southern social usage. There is a deliberate attempt to associate cross-cousin marriage with élite groups. This would heighten the antiquity of the custom as well as the exclusive character of the groups involved. It has been argued that in order to prolong the relationship established by marriage between kin-groups two techniques were used to record the relationship.<sup>62</sup> One was that the original relationship could be traced back to sibling incest, thereby emphasising the close blood tie; and the other was the frequent introduction of cross-cousin marriage at appropriate points in the genealogy among the related lineages. It is evident that at least the Śākya and Koliya were closely connected by kinship and the use of both these techniques in their records may have been an attempt to emphasise the connection. The techniques would be identical for both matrilineal and patrilineal groups so that cross-cousin marriage need not indicate, as it was once thought to, the precondition of a matrilineal society. At another level incest is a logical explanation of how two people could found a lineage. That the questioning if not the tabu on incest had crept into some of the later Buddhist texts is evident for example from the reference to the Śākya being rebuked by the Koliya for cohabiting with their own sisters.<sup>63</sup>

The *kṣatriya* status of the tribe is both assumed and made implicit in the fact that the origin is always from an established royal family either of the Ikṣvāku lineage or from the king of Banaras. The Ikṣvāku lineage would make these tribes off-shoots of the Sūryavaṃśi. The repeated theme of exile would either point to their being dissident groups or else that they migrated from the family base, generally a kingdom along the Ganges river or the middle Ganges plain, to the foothills of the Himalayas. The theme of exile would also become necessary where a major social tabu, that of sibling incest, was being broken, even if only symbolically. Possibly these were groups of cultivators in origin belonging to the *jana* (but perhaps not to the *rājakula* or the landowning groups) who had migrated in search of new land and on becoming prosperous adopted the *kṣatriya* genealogy of the *jana* from which they came. Equally possibly they could have been local tribes who on becoming agriculturalists and acquiring landownership and status, sought links with the prestigious Ikṣvāku tradition and invented the myth of exile.

That there was some element of discordance is evident from the fact that in spite of the Buddhist insistence on their *kṣatriya* status these tribes are never listed in the Purāṇic genealogies. If it was merely a question of discounting those who were the fountain-head of heterodox movements, surely the Purāṇic genealogies would have deliberately included them and described them either as *vrātya-kṣatriyas* or else given them *śūdra* status.<sup>44</sup> The disavowal of monarchy as the accepted political system may in part explain their exclusion from the Purāṇic lists. In the case of Vaiśālī for example, the period of monarchy is referred to in the Purāṇic genealogies but there is silence with regard to the period when it was the nucleus of the Vṛjjan confederacy. Even though the Śākya and Koliya in their myths emanate from royal families, they do not appear to have repeated the experience of monarchy and their political organisation seems more often to have been oligarchic, the emphasis being on political egalitarianism extending to at least the *kṣatriya* families. The reference to sixteen pairs of twins can be interpreted as an attempt at the symbolic diffusion of power within a small but powerful social group. In a monarchical situation presumably there would have been a single pair of twins. That substantially the same myth is related for all these *janas* suggests that they formed a separate group; probably in origin an extended kin group settled in geographical proximity of each other. Alternatively the use of a similar origin myth may have been deliberate; to emphasise a similarity of political and social culture and an exclusivity which separated them from the more common monarchical *janapadas*.

The expanded version of the myth in the *Mahāvastu* seems much more elaborate with an implicit attempt at providing explanations. Thus the name Ikṣvāku is introduced through the reference to the sugarcane stalks and the association with the Śūryavaṃśa lineage is also made clear. The location of Kapilāvastu<sup>45</sup> is more explicitly described as being north across the Bhāgīrathī and into the Snowy Mountain, presumably the proximity to the Himalayas. This explanation would be necessary for the new audience for Buddhist literature who would be unfamiliar with northern India.

The theme of the exile of princes carries echoes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It would seem from the frequent references to this theme and to that of the abduction of princesses in Buddhist literature, that exiled princes may well have been a stereotype of the folktale. The *Dasaratha Jātaka* suggests the possible existence of an earlier *Rāma-kathā*, the events of the *Jātaka* being a Buddhist version of the story of Rāma. It is not without significance that the events of the *Rāmāyaṇa* also concern the members of the Ikṣvāku-Śūryavaṃśi lineage.

The importance of the *kṣatriya* in society is also apparent from another myth which relates to the origin of government.<sup>55</sup> When the Buddha was asked about the origin of government he explained that to begin with the world was of a utopian order where no one laboured and time was passed in pleasant leisure. Gradually this golden age began to tarnish and evil crept into the ways of man. The cause of the decay was man's desire for possession and this was reflected in the emergence of the family as a social institution with the possession of woman by man, and in the notion of personal property where fields were demarcated and were claimed by individuals. Ultimately the situation became so chaotic that the people gathered together and elected one from among them (the great elect or the *mahāsammata*) in whom they invested the power to make laws and maintain order and to whom as recompense for performing this unenviable task, they agreed to pay a percentage of their produce.

The story apart from its strikingly rational assumptions reflects early thinking on the origin of the *kṣatriyas*. A demarcation is made between the period of common ownership of land and the later evolution of private ownership. Out of a non-stratified society there first arose the stratification of occupations. Subsequent to this, those who owned land were set apart and the establishment of the family is also associated with the cultivation of land. Ownership of land accelerates dispute and disequilibrium which can only be tentatively corrected by the imposition of an authority which lay above and beyond that invested in ordinary persons. The crux of the story relates to the two areas of *kṣatriya* interest, land-ownership and the exercise of political authority.

The readjustment of the format of the Buddhist origin myth of the Śākya and the Koliya to changed social conditions in a later period becomes apparent in the myth regarding Vijaya and the early history of Ceylon as recorded in the *Mahāvamsa*.<sup>56</sup> A princess of Vaṅga, too arrogant to accept a human husband is married to a lion. She gave birth to a son Sīhabāhu and a daughter Sīhāsavali but remained unhappy and homesick. Ultimately she persuaded Sīhabāhu to kill his father, the lion, whereupon the princess with her two children returned to her father's kingdom. But soon after this the children left her, wandered away to a distant place where they married each other, built themselves a city and established a kingdom. The marriage resulted in sixteen pairs of twin sons. Among these Vijaya was regarded as the eldest. He was however so evil that he had to be exiled but was permitted to take seven hundred attendants with him. He travelled at first to western India and finally arrived in Ceylon together with his attendants on the very day of Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. The island was inhabited only by *yakkhas* and *yakhiṇīs* whom he subdued. He sent to India for wives for himself and his

attendants and not only made the island fit for human habitation but became himself a virtuous king.

The myth seeks to introduce all the elements of the traditional origin myth of the Buddhist texts. There are also underlying the story, many levels of assumption. The geographical area of the story is very wide, starting with eastern India, moving to western India and from there to Ceylon. This is not the compact region of the earlier myths. At the time of the compilation of the text both eastern and western India were in close contact with Ceylon. The western contact is attested to linguistically, the Pāli of the Chronicles having an affinity with the western *prākṛt* of India. The eastern link may have been introduced to establish as close a connection as possible with the Buddhist homeland. The myth is replete with assumptions regarding the social order. Vijaya's unusual and supernatural origin is amply emphasised: he is the grandson of a lion, the son of an incestuous marriage and the eldest of sixteen pairs of twin brothers. Incest in this case, again, points to purity of descent. Uniqueness is further stressed by the sixteen pairs of twin brothers, although here the eldest stands out since the context is monarchy and not oligarchy. His social status is indicated by his royal antecedents both in the animal world and in the human. Royal antecedents also provide him with the economic means to travel the long distance from Vaṅga to Ceylon together with his attendants. The story of the exile was necessary to explain why anyone would travel such a long distance to an island inhabited only by demons. It is appropriate that the man who founded the first human colony in Ceylon should arrive on the auspicious day of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. Such a connection would be virtually inevitable in the *Mahāvamśa* which after all was the Chronicle of the major Buddhist monastery of Ceylon, the Mahāvihāra. The etymological interest is also clear from the attempt to explain the derivation of the name of the island—Sinhala—associated with a lion. The earlier origin myths had by now almost become archetypes. The story of Vijaya does not occur at the start of the *Mahāvamśa* but in the sixth chapter. Nevertheless it marks the commencement of the narrative of the history of Ceylon. Earlier chapters relate the story of the Buddha's visit to Ceylon and the conversion of Aśoka which prepares the ground for the arrival of Buddhism. This structure makes the narrative more purposive and strengthens the notion of the mission of Buddhism to Ceylon.

The social function of these origin myths in the context of the early Indian historical tradition appears to be fourfold: to establish kinship links, to emphasise the legitimacy of succession, to indicate the migration of important groups and to provide social status to those who had acquired political power. The recognition of kinship links among the *kṣatriya* families in the mid-first millennium B.C. was central to the question of rights of land.

∴

ownership and ultimately political authority. In the first millennium A.D., with new claimants to *kṣatriya* status and political power in the many dynasties of the period, the kinship links were revived through the search for actual or fabricated genealogical connections.<sup>67</sup>

The legitimacy of succession was implicit in the genealogical links requiring *kṣatriya* antecedents. In the monarchical system there was the additional need to stress primogeniture. That this was a real concern is evident from other literature which stresses not only the need for hereditary succession but also the rights of seniority within it.<sup>68</sup> It is not surprising that this question crops up repeatedly in the literature of the mid-first millennium A.D. and later, where in plays such as the *Devicandragupta* and in historical biographies such as the *Harṣacarita* and the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, there is an elaborate justification for the transgressing of the rule.<sup>69</sup>

The theme of migration, often disguised as exile, sets the geographical dimensions of the social group and can be used to establish the rights and priority of a particular group over a particular region. This assumes significance in periods when new groups are moving in as entrepreneurs in either previously occupied areas or in newly opened up lands: the entrepreneurs in the mid-first millennium A.D. being the recipients of grants of land. Those who succeeded in establishing new dynasties would either have to link themselves genealogically with the descent groups who were already associated with the area or else would have to introduce the idea of migration. The Sisodia Rajput link with the Sūryavaṃśī lineage and the migration of one of their ancestors from Lahore (associated with Lava the son of Rāma) to Rajasthan would form a case in point.<sup>70</sup> Purāṇic sources refer to the dispersal of the Haihayas (a sub-lineage of the Yādavas). This provided a useful peg for many early medieval dynasties to hang their genealogies such as the Kalacuris of 'Tripuri'<sup>71</sup> and the Muṣakavaṃśa of Kerala.<sup>72</sup> Exiled princes also provide one of the mechanisms by which local tradition can be hooked onto the 'classical' tradition and vice versa.

In both the *itihāsa-purāṇa* tradition and the Buddhist tradition, as far as origin myths are concerned, it is in the main the *kṣatriya* status which is sought to be validated. The origin myths of the *kṣatriya* tribes in Buddhist literature are attempts to provide social status for those who played an important part in the events relating to the establishment of Buddhism, and are the counterparts to the lineage myths in the Purāṇic tradition, both sets of myths endorsing the groups in political authority at the time. Nor is it coincidental that this search for validation through myth is systematised and recorded at the time when dynasties claiming *kṣatriya* status rose to political control and in the Buddhist case, sectarian institutions of the Buddhist *saṅgha* were involved, albeit not always directly, in political authority.

## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to my colleagues Dr. Satish Saberwal and Dr. B. D. Chattopadhyaya who read an earlier draft of this paper and discussed it with me.

### NOTES & REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths*, 31 ff.
- <sup>2</sup> Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*.
- <sup>3</sup> A. Lang, *Custom and Myth; Myth, Ritual and Religion*.
- <sup>4</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*; J. E. Harrison, *Themis; Mythology*.
- <sup>5</sup> As in *Magic, Science and Religion or Myth in Primitive Psychology*.
- <sup>6</sup> C. Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked and From Honey to Ashes*, being the first two volumes so far translated into English of a longer work, *Mythologiques*. The more successful applications of the structural analysis of myth have been in the myths of pre-literate societies. E. Leach (ed.) *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism* and T. A. Sebeok (ed.), *Myth: A Symposium*. Changes introduced in myths over a period of time in literate societies could add a worthwhile dimension even to structural analysis.
- <sup>7</sup> The notion of the archetype as developed by S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* was of considerable influence. But the names of Jung and Cassirer are more closely associated with the growth of this idea. C. G. Jung and K. Kerényi, *Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, and E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2., *Mythical Thought*.
- <sup>8</sup> Eliade has touched on this theme in many of his writings but more especially in *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Myth and Reality*, and in *Patterns in Comparative Religion*.
- <sup>9</sup> V. Turner, 'Myth and Symbol' in *The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. X.
- <sup>10</sup> Georges Dumezil's *Mythe et Épopée* in three volumes is not as yet available in an English translation but an attempt has been made to represent his ideas in C. Scott Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology*. Dumezil uses the theory of the three functions (which can be approximately translated as sanctity, coercion and fecundity) as the basic pattern of Indo-European symbolism and myth. None of the functions are precisely defined and the overlapping makes for a rather ambiguous analysis at times. Also associated with these ideas are the writings of Stig Wikander, especially the paper entitled 'La Légende des Pāṇḍavas et la substructure mythique du Mahābhārata' in Georges Dumezil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus*, IV.
- <sup>11</sup> K. Thomas, 'Anthropology and History' in *Past and Present*, No. 24, April 1963 1 ff.
- <sup>12</sup> *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I.8.1.1-10; *Matsya Purāṇa* I. 11-34; *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparvan, III. 185.
- <sup>13</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV. 1.
- <sup>14</sup> M. Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 5 ff. ●
- <sup>15</sup> This point came up in a discussion with Professor A. Kilmer.
- <sup>16</sup> Sally Falk Moore, 'Descent and Symbolic Filiation', *The American Anthropologist*, No. 66, VI, pt. 1, 1964 pp. 1308-20.
- <sup>17</sup> *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII. 14.23; *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, III.2.13.15; *Aśānāṣīya Sutta*, *Digha Nikāya*, III. 199.7. ff.
- <sup>18</sup> *Vāyu Purāṇa*, VIII. 176 ff.
- <sup>19</sup> *Rgveda*, X. 10.
- <sup>20</sup> Sukumari Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, p. 217-18.
- <sup>21</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV. 1.
- <sup>22</sup> The symbolism of the sun and the moon occurs frequently in Yoga and in Tantric texts although in these the sexual association is reversed: the moon is associated with the male and the sun with the female. M. Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 239.
- <sup>23</sup> For a description of the segmentary system which fairly approximates some of the features of the Candravamśa, see Marshall D. Sahlins, 'The Segmentary Lineage: an organisation of predatory expansion', *The American Anthropologist*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 1961, pp. 332-345.
- <sup>24</sup> F. E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, 15 ff.
- <sup>25</sup> A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*.
- <sup>26</sup> G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths*, 261 ff.



## EARLY INDIAN HISTORICAL TRADITION

<sup>20</sup> L. Woolly, *Excavations at Ur*, pp. 34-6; *Ur of the Chaldees*, 29 ff. *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. I pt. 1. p. 353 ff. Reliable evidence on substantial floods in India during this period (as available so far) would point to two areas and time brackets. The first would be the flooding of Mohenjo-daro and the lower Indus valley in the early second millennium B.C. (G. Dales, 'New investigations at Mohenjo-daro', *Archaeology*, 1965, No. 18). The second would be that of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and particularly Hastinapur in the early first Millennium B.C. (B. B. Lal, 'Excavations at Hastinapur', *Ancient India*, 1954 and 1955, Nos. 10 and 11). The second is certainly too late in time to have been the original of such a myth. More than likely the myth was not referring to any particular flood but rather to the possibility of a flood as a cataclysmic point of time and change and this notion may have arisen from the observation of recurring floods in the area.

<sup>21</sup> Th. Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King-List*.

<sup>22</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV. 6 and 10.

<sup>23</sup> N. S. Bose, *History of the Chandellas of Jejakabhukti*; E. Zarnas and J. Auboyer, *Khajuraho*, 30 ff.

<sup>24</sup> *Rgveda*, X. 95.

<sup>25</sup> *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI.5.1. 1 ff.

<sup>26</sup> *Mahābhārata*, Adiparvan, VII. 70-71.

<sup>27</sup> Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, IV, 109 ff.

<sup>28</sup> D. D. Kōsanbi, *Myth and Reality*, 47 ff.

<sup>29</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV. 10.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Mahābhārata*, Adiparvan, VII. 80.

<sup>32</sup> Georges Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*.

<sup>33</sup> *Vedic Index*, II, pp. 11-12.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>35</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I. 13.

<sup>36</sup> *Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparvan, LXVII, 19-24.

<sup>37</sup> *Vedic Index*, Vol. I. p. 452; *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I. 13.

<sup>39</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, IV. 20.

<sup>40</sup> *Rgveda*, X. 98; *Nirukta*, II. 10; *Bṛhaddevatā*, VII. 148 ff.

<sup>41</sup> *Sutta Nipāta*, 420 ff; *Sutta Nipāta Commentary*, I, 352 ff; *Sumangalavilāsinī*, I. pp. 258-60.

<sup>42</sup> B. C. Law, *Some Kṣatriya Tribes of Ancient India*, p. 162 ff. *Mahāvastu*, I. pp. 348-52.

<sup>43</sup> *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, I. 16 in *Dīgha Nikāya*, I; *Kunāla Jātaka* No. 536. (Vol. V. p. 219).

<sup>44</sup> H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 192 ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Kunāla Jātaka*, No. 536.

<sup>46</sup> *Mahāvamsa Tika*, p. 180 ff.

<sup>47</sup> *Buddhaghosa, Paramatthajotika*. Khuddakapāṭha, pp. 158-60.

<sup>48</sup> S. R. Goyal, *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 81 ff.

<sup>49</sup> Paśupati inscription of Jayadeva, quoted by B. C. Law, *Kṣatriya Class in Buddhist India*, pp. 28-9; J. F. Fleet (ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, pp. 155, 153, 156.

<sup>50</sup> S. Beal, *Romantic History of Buddha*, p. 18 ff.

<sup>51</sup> *Dasaratha Jātaka*, No. 461 (Vol. IV, p. 78).

<sup>52</sup> P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, II.1. p. 460 ff.

<sup>53</sup> T. R. Trautmann, 'Cross-Cousin Marriage in Ancient North India?' in T. R. Trautmann (ed.) *Kinship and History in South Asia*.

<sup>54</sup> *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, X. 54. 18.

<sup>55</sup> Sally Falk Moore, *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> *Sutta Nipāta Commentary*, I. 357; *Kunāla Jātaka*, No. 536.

<sup>57</sup> *Manu*, X. 22, does however refer to the Licchavis as *vrātya kṣatriyas*.

<sup>58</sup> *Aggañña Sutta* in *Dīgha Nikāya*, III. 93.

<sup>59</sup> *Mahāvamsa* VI.

<sup>60</sup> For some references to fabricated genealogies see D. C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 24 ff.

<sup>61</sup> *Arthasāstra*, I, 17.34; *Majjhima Nikāya*, II. 83. *Manu*, IX. pp. 105-109.

<sup>62</sup> The first of these texts justifies the succession of Candragupta II, who, owing to the cowardly act of his elder brother Rāmagupta had finally (it would seem from other sources) to kill his elder brother and usurp the throne. The two biographies in both cases concern the succession of younger brothers and here again an elaborate argument is produced to prove



## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

the justification for the younger brother. In the *Harṣacarita* the elder brother is killed by the enemy so that the justification is not so elaborate. In the *Vikramāṅkadēvarita* we are told that the god Śiva himself commanded the younger brother to usurp the throne for the sake of the well-being of the people and the prosperity of the kingdom.

<sup>10</sup> J. Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, I. p. 176.

<sup>11</sup> F. Kielhorn, 'Kalachuris of Tripuri', *Epigraphia Indica*, II. pp. 300-303.

<sup>12</sup> T. Gopinath Rao, 'Extract from the Muṣakavamśa . . .', *Travancore Archaeological Series*, II, 1.No.10. pp. 87-113. M. G. S. Narayanan, 'History from the Muṣakavamśa', *P.A.I.O.C.*, Jadavpur, 1969.

### **III BENGAL**



# Pundra/Paundra-vardhana Bhukti in Early Bengal Epigraphs

ABDUL MOMIN CHOWDHURY

Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* and Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti*, or sometimes simply Puṇḍra or Pauṇḍra *bhukti* figure prominently in the early epigraphs of Bengal from the Maurya period down to the end of Sena rule. Scholars working in the field of ancient Bengal are unanimous in identifying this administrative division with northern Bengal, deriving its name from the well-known ancient tribal name, the Puṇḍras; and the ancient city of Puṇḍranagar has been identified with Mahāsthān in Bogra district. The appearance of the name in the records of the Candras, the Varmans and the Senas has been explained by assuming that the administrative division had an extension of connotation and embraced parts of south-eastern Bengal as well. Such an assumption in fact means that the administrative division at times included almost the whole of Bengal except a portion of north-western and western Bengal. To the writer of the following pages this general assumption does not seem to conform to the evidence found in available epigraphs and that is the apology that the writer has to offer for this paper.

R. C. Majumdar, from the evidence of the Rāmpāl and Dhullā copper-plates of Śrīcandra by which lands were granted in the Pauṇḍra *bhukti*, wrote, "This does not necessarily mean that Śrīcandra's supremacy extended over North Bengal. For although originally that was the connotation of *Pauṇḍra-vardhana-bhukti*, later (e.g. during the time of the Senas), it included the whole of Southern Bengal right up to the sea, and this might have been the case even in the time of Śrīcandra."<sup>1</sup> While writing about the Varmans R. C. Majumdar seems to land in a little trouble. Accepting the identification of Kauśāmbī of Bhojavarman's Belāva plate with Kusumbā of Rajshahi

district, he writes, "Bhojavarman's kingdom might have included a portion of Varendra, the *Paṇḍravardhana-bhukti par excellence*."<sup>3</sup> But, realising the difficulty, he changes the tone and writes, "But this is by no means certain. For all we know, the kingdom of the Varmans might have been confined to Eastern Bengal with Vikramapura as its capital."<sup>4</sup> The appearance of the name of the *bhukti* in the Sena records led R. C. Majumdar to write, "The extent of *Paṇḍravardhana-bhukti* was vastly increased under the Senas and this single *bhukti* included the whole of modern Rajshahi, Dacca and Presidency Divisions, and a part, at least, of the Chittagong Division."<sup>4</sup>

B. C. Sen also subscribes to this general assumption when he writes, "Not unlike other parts of India, it (*Paṇḍravardhana*) witnessed political vicissitudes of different dynasties during a period extending from the 8th to the 12th century A.D. This explains its mention in the inscriptions of the Chandras, the Varmans, and lastly, of the Sena dynasty."<sup>5</sup> He also thinks about the gradual territorial expansion of the *bhukti* and writes, "The *Paṇḍravardhana-bhukti* gradually attained the position and dignity of by far the largest administrative division in the whole province including within its jurisdiction not only North Bengal, to which originally it must have largely corresponded, but South-East (*Samatāṭa*) and East Bengal (*Vaṅga*) as well."<sup>6</sup>

Niharranjan Ray also thinks of an extended territorial connotation of *Paṇḍra/Paṇḍra-varḍhana bhukti* in the Pala-Sena period. In the Gupta age its boundary was limited to northern Bengal. In the Pāla-Sena period its connotation extended and it embraced a much wider area including south-western and south-eastern Bengal.<sup>7</sup>

N. K. Bhattasali, after an analysis of the land grants of the Pālas, Candras, Varmans and the Senas, also arrived at a wide territorial connotation for *Paṇḍra/Paṇḍra-varḍhana bhukti*, which, he thought, included northern Bengal, parts of south-western Bengal (up to the *Bhāgīrathī* in the west) and south-eastern Bengal (up to the *Meghnā* in the east) going up to the sea.<sup>8</sup> It may be noted here that as a result of recent finds the territorial division shall have to be credited with territories beyond the *Meghnā* in the Sylhet-Comilla region.

D. C. Sircar, while editing the recently discovered *Paścimbhāg* (Sylhet) plate of Śrīcandra, which grants land in the *Śrīhaṭṭa-maṇḍala* (obviously modern Sylhet) within *Paṇḍravardhana-bhukti* writes, "It is well-known that the territory of *Paṇḍravardhana* originally comprised the districts of North Bengal and had its headquarters at modern Mahāsthān in the Bogra District of East Pakistan [now Bangladesh] though its jurisdiction later extended, probably due to the expansion of the Pāla empire, over *Vaṅga*

comprising the *bhāga* of Vikramapura in the Dacca region and also over the Khādī-vishaya in the present 24-Parganas District. Recently the Mehar plate showed that Samatata formed a part of the same Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti, and we now learn from the Paścimbhāg plate that the said *bhukti* also included the Śrīhaṭṭa-maṇḍala."<sup>9</sup>

A. H. Dani,<sup>10</sup> who edited the recently discovered Maināmatī plates of the Candras, also subscribes to the extended territorial connotation of the *bhukti*. The wide expansive connotation of the *bhukti* is also evident in H. C. Raychaudhuri's definition of the extent of the *bhukti*: "It seems to have been the biggest administrative division or province of the Gauḍa empire. It extended from the summit of the Himalayas (*Himavach-chhikhara* of a Dāmodarpur plate) in the north to Khādī in the Sundarban region in the south. The Bhāgīrathī (Jāhnavī) separated it from the Vardhamāna-bhukti in the west. The Madhyapāḍā Plate of Viśvarūpasena extends its eastern boundary to the Sea, apparently the Bay of Bengal and the estuary of the Meghnā. According to the Mehar copper-plate, dated 1234 A.D., it comprised even a part of the district of Tippera."<sup>11</sup>

It is apparent from the above that there is unanimity among scholars about the gradual extension of the territorial connotation of Puṇḍra/Paṇḍra-vardhana (sometimes mentioned without vardhana) *bhukti*, and the presence of this name in the records of the Candras, Varmans and the Senas has been explained through this general assumption. Also it seems that scholars have not made any distinction between Puṇḍra and Paṇḍra, both the forms appear in Bengal epigraphs. The former appears in all cases with the suffix *vardhana*, but the latter appears without this suffix in the Candra and Varman records and with the suffix in the Sena records.

Now the question is whether the general assumption regarding the wide territorial connotation of the *bhukti* can be accepted? The recently found Candra plates, namely the Paścimbhāg plate of Śrīcandra and the three Maināmatī plates of Laḍahacandra and Govindacandra, grant lands in the Sylhet and Comilla region. This would mean that the extent of the Puṇḍra/Paṇḍra-vardhana *bhukti* has to be taken to cover a very wide area of Bengal—from Sylhet to Rajmahal, from the mountain region of north Bengal to the sea shore and from Comilla to 24 Parganas. That would mean that in fact about 75% of the area of Bengal was under the jurisdiction of one administrative division, whereas in the rest 25% area we have the existence of even three *bhuktis* in the later period. On this ground alone, a re-thinking on the problem would not be unreasonable. It would be also worthwhile to look for a satisfactory explanation of the appearance of the name Paṇḍra, or Paṇḍravardhana *bhukti* in the records of the Candras, the Varmans and the Senas. For a clear understanding of the problem a detailed computation

of the available data regarding Puṇḍra/Pauṇḍra-vardhana *bhukti* may be undertaken.

I. *Maurya* :

Mahāsthān Brāhmi inscription<sup>12</sup>: —

The reference to *Puṇḍanagalate* has been taken to refer to Puṇḍrana-gar, identified with Mahāsthān (in Bogra), the administrative head-quarters for the region in the Mauryan administrative set up.<sup>13</sup>

II. *Gupta* :

Puṇḍravardhana figures prominently in a number of epigraphs of the Gupta age.

1. Dāmodarpur plate of Kumāragupta I (G.E. 124/444 A.D.)<sup>14</sup>: —  
Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*<sup>15</sup>
2. Dāmodarpur plate of Kumāragupta I (G.E. 128/448 A.D.)<sup>16</sup>: —  
Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*
3. Baigrām plate of G.E. 128/448 A.D.<sup>17</sup>: —  
The district officer (locality not named) addresses from Pañcanagarī. Lands granted in two villages connected with the village of *Vāyigrāma*, which is obviously modern Baigrām (Bogra district), the find place of the plate.<sup>18</sup> It has also been suggested that Pañcanagarī is to be identified with modern Pāñchbibi in Bogra district.<sup>19</sup>
4. Pāhārpur plate of G.E. 159/479 A.D.<sup>20</sup>: —  
Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
Nāgiraṭṭa *maṇḍala*  
Dakṣiṇāmsaka *vīthi*  
Villages: Palāśāṭṭa, Nityagohālī, Vaṭagohālī etc. (the last identified with Goālbhītā near Pāhārpur)<sup>21</sup>
5. Dāmodarpur plate of Budhagupta (G.E. 163/482 A.D.)<sup>22</sup>: —  
Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
From Palāśavṛndaka  
Caṇḍagrāma  
Lands bounded on south, west and east by the northern boundary of the village Vāyigrāma, obviously same as Vāyigrāma of Baigram plate mentioned above (No. 3).
6. Dāmodarpur plate of Budhagupta (476–95 A.D.)<sup>23</sup>: —  
Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*  
In Himavacchikhara<sup>24</sup>

7. Dāmodarpur plate of G.E. 224/543 A.D.<sup>25</sup>: —  
 Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
 Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*  
 Purāṇavṛndikahari *grāma*<sup>26</sup>.

A few general observations may be made regarding these seven references in the Gupta epigraphs: —

- (i) In all the epigraphs the name of the *bhukti* is Puṇḍravardhana.
- (ii) Koṭivarṣa, identified with Bāngarh in Dinajpur district, is the most prominent *viṣaya*.
- (iii) The find places of the plates as well as the so far identifiable internal evidence point to the location of the *bhukti* in the Rajshahi, Bogra and Dinajpur districts or broadly the region of North Bengal.

Hsüan Tsang's account of his journey in this part of the country in the second quarter of the 7th century A.D. helps us to locate correctly Puṇḍravardhana and its capital.<sup>27</sup> Collating the information of the Gupta epigraphs and Hsüan Tsang the boundary of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* in the Gupta age and the succeeding century may be fixed with fair amount of certainty. It comprised the whole region of northern Bengal, from the Rajmahal, the Ganges and the Bhāgirathī to the Karatoyā—quite a wide tract.<sup>28</sup>

### III. Pāla:

Reference to Puṇḍravardhana in the Pāla epigraphs are numerous.

*Dharmapāla* (c. 781–821)<sup>29</sup>

1. Khālīmpur plate<sup>30</sup>: —  
 Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
 Vyāghrataṭī *maṇḍala*<sup>31</sup>  
 Mahantāprakāśa *viṣaya*

*Gopāla II* (952–969)

2. Jajilpārā plate<sup>32</sup>: —  
 Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
 Kuddālakṣhāta *viṣaya*

*Mahīpāla I* (c. 995–1043)

3. Belwā plate<sup>33</sup>: —  
 Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
 One village, Nandisvāminī, in Puṇḍarikā *maṇḍala*  
 One village, Gaṇeśvara in Pañcanagarī *viṣaya*  
 (Possibly same as Pañcanagarī of the Baigrām plate)<sup>34</sup>

4. Bāngarh plate<sup>35</sup>: —  
 Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
 Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*



Gokalikā *maṇḍala*

Village: Kuraṭapallikā with the exception of Chuṭapallikā.

*Vigrahaṭpāla III* (c. 1058–1075)

5. Belwā plate<sup>36</sup>: —

Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*

Phāṇitavīthī *viṣaya*

Puṇḍarikā *maṇḍala* (same as in the Belwā plate of Mahīpāla I).

It mentions Vellavā (line II.13) as the abode of the donee. This may be identified with modern Belwā. The village Bahaḍā may also be modern Cak Bairā, a few miles to the north-west of Belwā.<sup>37</sup>

6. Āmgāchi plate<sup>38</sup>: —

Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*

Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*

Brāhmaṇagrāma *maṇḍala*.

*Madanapāla* (c. 1143–61)

7. Manahali plate<sup>39</sup>: —

Paṇḍravardhana *bhukti*

Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*

Halāvartta *maṇḍala*

Kāsthāgiri (?) *grāma*.

A few general observations can be made about the references in the Pāla records:

- (i) All the records mention Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*, except the last one. We shall try to offer some explanation for this change later.
- (ii) Of the seven records three mention Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya*, the district in which lands were granted. As we have seen earlier Koṭivarṣa figured prominently in the Gupta records. Koṭivarṣa's identification with Bāngarh in Dinajpur district is unanimously accepted.
- (iii) The find places of all the records are in the region of north Bengal.
- (iv) Though the *maṇḍalas*, *viṣayas* and *grāmas* in the two Belwā plates could not be identified, at least the internal evidence suggests that the lands granted by them lay in the neighbourhood of Dinajpur.
- (v) The mention of Koṭivarṣa *viṣaya* in the Bāngarh, Āmgāchi and Manahali plates would also suggest that the lands lay in Dinajpur district and neighbouring areas.
- (vi) From the above points would it not be reasonable to hold that Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* of the Pāla records connoted an area which has to be placed in the region of northern Bengal?<sup>40</sup>

Now we take up the records connected with the ruling dynasties who held sway in south-eastern Bengal, when the Pālas held northern, north-western and south-western Bengal and parts of Bihar.

IV. *Candra*<sup>41</sup> (c. 900–1045) :

*Śrīcandra* (c. 900–975)

1. Rāmpāl plate<sup>42</sup> : —

*Paṇḍra bhukti*  
*Nānya maṇḍala*<sup>43</sup>  
*Nchakāṣṭhi grāma*

2. Dhullā plate<sup>44</sup> : —

*Paṇḍra bhukti*  
*Ballimundā khaṇḍala*  
*Khadiravillī viṣaya*  
*Yolā maṇḍala*  
*Ikkādāśi viṣaya*

N. K. Bhattasali identified the villages mentioned in this plate with villages of almost similar names in the Manikganj sub-division of Dacca district.<sup>45</sup>

*Yolā maṇḍala* has been identified with Manikganj sub-division of Dacca district.<sup>46</sup>

3. Madanpur plate<sup>47</sup> : —

*Paṇḍra bhukti*  
*Yolā maṇḍala*  
*Vaṅgasāgara sambhāṇḍāriyake*<sup>48</sup>

4. Idilpur plate<sup>49</sup> : —

*Sataṭa-Padmāvāti viṣaya*  
*Kumāratālaka maṇḍala*  
*Leliyā grāma.*

The name of the *viṣaya* obviously refers to the well-known river Padmā and the name of the *maṇḍala* is connected with the river Kumāra, and still preserved in Kumārakhālī in Faridpur district.<sup>50</sup> *Sataṭa-Padmāvāti* was probably the name of a district on the banks of the river Padmā in the Dacca-Faridpur region.<sup>51</sup>

5. Paścimbhāg plate<sup>52</sup> : —

*Paṇḍravardhana bhukti*  
*Śrīhaṭṭa maṇḍala*  
*Garalā, Pogāra and Chandrapura viṣayas.*

The description of the three *viṣayas*, as recorded in the plate, afford their placement in the Moulvibazar sub-division of Sylhet.<sup>53</sup>

*Kalyāṇacandra* (c. 975–1000)

6. Dacca plate<sup>54</sup>: —

*Paṇḍra bhukti*

*Khāṭi maṇḍala*<sup>55</sup>

*Kuśa grāma*

*Laḍahacandra* (c. 1000–1020)

7. Maināmatī plate (No. 1)<sup>56</sup>: —

*Paṇḍra bhukti*

*Samatāṭa maṇḍala*

*Paṭṭikerake*

*Canipāvaṇī*

8. Maināmatī plate (No. 2)<sup>57</sup>: —

*Puṇḍra bhukti*

*Samatāṭa maṇḍala*

*Peraṇāṭana viṣaya*.

Land is granted for the temple of Laḍahamādhava in Paṭṭikera.

*Govindacandra* (c. 1020–1045)

9. Maināmatī plate<sup>58</sup>: —

*Paṇḍra bhukti*

*Samatāṭa maṇḍala*

*Peraṇāṭana viṣaya*.

Paṭṭikera in Nos. 7 and 8 is undoubtedly in Comilla district. The Copper-plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla<sup>59</sup> establishes that Paṭṭikera was the headquarters of Samatāṭa. Paṭṭikera is still a parganā in the Comilla district. This identification leads to the placement of Peraṇāṭana viṣaya in the region of Comilla and its neighbourhood. Though it is difficult to define precisely the boundary of ancient geographical names like Samatāṭa, but it is certain that it comprised the area of Comilla-Noakhali region.<sup>60</sup>

A few general observations can be made on the Candra plates and the appearance of the name of the *bhukti* in them:

(i) All the records<sup>61</sup> mention the name of one *bhukti*, which is invariably Paṇḍra and not Puṇḍra.

(ii) The extent of the *bhukti* can be fixed from the internal evidence of the plates as well as from the find places. Except the Rāmpāl plate of Śrīcandra and the Dacca plate of Kalyāṇacandra, by all the other plates lands were granted in Dacca-Faridpur, Comilla-Noakhali region of deltaic Bengal and Sylhet area.<sup>62</sup>

There is only one completely decipherable land-grant of the Varmans; other two being mutilated and almost undecipherable.<sup>63</sup>

V. *Varman* (c. 1080-1150)

1. Belāva plate<sup>64</sup>: —

Paṇḍra *bhukti*

Adhaṇḍattana *maṇḍala*

Kauśāmbī-Aṣṭagaccha *khaṇḍala*

Upyalikā *grāma*.

R. D. Banerji's<sup>65</sup> suggestion that Kauśāmbī is to be identified with Kuśumbā of Rajshahi district is not based on any good grounds. N. K. Bhattasali<sup>66</sup> is inclined to equate Adhaṇḍattana *maṇḍala* with Khāḍī *maṇḍala* of the Sena records and on that ground rejects R. D. Banerji's identification of Kauśāmbī. He further points out the Rajshahi region was at that time under Rāmapāla, the Pāla king. About the extent of the Varman kingdom he says, "It appears to have been bounded on the east, north and west by the Meghnā, the Ganges and the Bhagīrathī respectively."<sup>67</sup>

In the Varman record, it may be observed, the name of the *bhukti* is same as that in the Candra records, i.e., Paṇḍra.

Now let us take up the Sena records.

VI. Sena

*Vijayasena* (c. 1097-1160)

1. Barrackpur plate<sup>68</sup>: —

Paṇḍravardhana *bhukti*

Khāḍī *viśaya*

Ghāśasambhogabhāṭṭabādā *grāma*.

Khāḍī has been taken as Khāḍī parganā of the Diamond Harbour sub-division of the district of 24 Parganas.<sup>69</sup> N. K. Bhattasali has even suggested the identification of the village.<sup>70</sup>

*Lakṣmaṇasena* (c. 1178-1206)

2. Anulia plate<sup>71</sup>: —

Paṇḍravardhana *bhukti* in Vyāghrataṭī<sup>72</sup>

Mātharaṇḍiyā *grāma*

3. Tarpandighi plate<sup>73</sup>: —

Paṇḍravardhana *bhukti*

in Varendrī (*varendryām*)

Vclahiṣṭī *grāma*

4. Madhainagar plate<sup>74</sup>: —

Paṇḍravardhana *bhukti*

near Kāntāpura

in Varendrī (*varendryām*)

Dāpāṇiyā *grāma*

5. Bhowāl plate<sup>75</sup>: —  
 Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
 Vāścaśavṛtti<sup>76</sup>  
 Vatumvī *caturake*
6. Sundarban plate<sup>77</sup>: —  
 Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
 Khādī *maṇḍala*  
*Viśvarūpasena*
7. Sāhitya Pariṣat plate<sup>78</sup>: —  
 Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
 in the *nāṇya* region of Vaṅga (*vaṅge nāṇye*)  
 Rāmasiddhi *pāṭaka*
8. Madanapādā plate<sup>79</sup>: —  
 Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
*Vaṅge Vikramapura bhāge*  
 Piñjokāṣṭhī *grāma*.

The village has been identified by N. N. Vasu with Piñjāri. in Koṭālī-pādā pargana in Faridpur district.<sup>80</sup>

*Keśavasena*

9. Edilpur plate<sup>81</sup>: —  
 Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti*  
*Vaṅge Vikramapura bhāge*  
 Tālapādā *pāṭaka*.

A few general observations can be made on the Sena records:

- (i) In all the Sena records the name of the *bhukti* appears as Pauṇḍravardhana and nowhere Puṇḍravardhana has been used.
- (ii) Lands granted by the Barrackpur and Sundarban plates lay in the Khādī *maṇḍala* and if the identification of Khādī, as suggested, is accepted, it can be said that they lay in south-western Bengal.
- (iii) Lands granted by the Ānuliā plate was included in Vyāghrataṭī, and all suggestions about its identification indicate its location in some parts of south-western Bengal.
- (iv) It can be said with certainty that lands granted by Tarpandighi and Madhainagar plates lay in parts of northern Bengal. The expression *varendryām* in these two plates make the location obvious.
- (v) Lands granted by the three copper-plates of Viśvarūpasena and Keśavasena, sons of Lakṣmaṇasena, would no doubt be in south-eastern Bengal as it is well known that Sena power was confined to this area after the Muslims had occupied the north-western and

northern parts of Bengal. The expressions *nāvyē vaṅge* and *vaṅge vikramapura bhāge*, used in these plates, clearly indicate the location of the lands in parts of south-eastern Bengal.

- (vi) If the Bhowāl plate of Lakṣmaṇasena's 27th regnal year is taken to be a grant after his retreat to south-eastern Bengal after the Muslim invasion,<sup>83</sup> we have also to locate the lands in south-eastern Bengal.

The above detailed analysis of the Bengal epigraphs would throw some light on the whole problem. Can Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* of the Gupta and Pāla records<sup>84</sup> be taken to be same as Pauṇḍra or Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti* of the Candra, Varman and Sena records? Or can we postulate about the existence of two *bhuktis* at some period under the rule of separate dynasties, and in the Sena period when the two areas came under the rule of one dynasty, one name was used?

Scholars have explained the expansive territorial connotation of the *bhukti* (if the *bhukti* is considered to be one its territorial connotation becomes expansive) by pointing out to the extension of Pāla rule to south-eastern Bengal. Their proposition is that when Pāla rule extended to south-eastern Bengal the *bhukti*, which originally connoted the area of north Bengal, came to embrace the whole area of south-eastern Bengal.<sup>84</sup>

This brings us to another problem: whether Pāla rule extended to south-eastern part of Bengal during its initial years? The history of this portion of Bengal has hitherto not been viewed in the right perspective. Recent finds at Maināmatī and other places have led to gross alterations of the existing ideas and have thrown fresh light on the history of this region. It is now possible to reconstruct the history of this region with a fair amount of accuracy.<sup>85</sup>

Not a single inscription up to the time of Gopāla II (c. 952-969) has been found to refer to the Pāla occupation of south-eastern Bengal. The Mandhuk inscription of the 1st year of Gopāla II<sup>86</sup> has been taken to indicate the existence of Pāla rule in the area of its find. The Gaṇeśa image, which contains this inscription in its pedestal, is made of black basalt and can be said to be of external origin. The existence of the continuous paramount rule of the Candras from 900 to 1050 A.D. in south-eastern Bengal, about which very little doubt exists now, do not leave scope for any guess about Gopāla II's rule in this area.<sup>87</sup>

It has been suggested by the present writer that in all probability Pāla rule extended to south-eastern Bengal sometime between the reign of Mahīpāla I and Mahīpāla II (between 1043 and 1075 A.D.) and the Baghaura and Narayanpur Image inscriptions<sup>88</sup> should be assigned to Mahīpāla II.<sup>89</sup> But the Pāla interregnum was shortlived and in the last quarter of the 11th

century A.D. the Varmans, taking advantage of the weakness of the Pāla empire, which manifested itself in the revolt and initial success of the Kaivarta leader in northern Bengal, established their power in south-eastern Bengal.<sup>90</sup> The Pāla epigraphs discussed above would add grounds to this belief. The find places, internal evidence and the general observations that we have put forward would suggest that Pāla hold over south-eastern Bengal is not warranted by available sources. So the idea of Pāla power in south-eastern Bengal in the pre-Candra period is not based on good grounds and hence it has to be given up. On the other hand the existence of independent rule in south-eastern Bengal dispels the idea. So the appearance of the name *Paṇḍra bhukti* in the Candra epigraphs has to be explained. The idea of the extension of Pāla power and the resultant extension of the territorial connotation of *Puṇḍra bhukti* does not hold good.

Analysis of the Candra plates led us to make two general observations that all the records invariably record *Paṇḍra* and that from the internal evidence of the plates the sway of the *bhukti* must be placed in south-eastern Bengal including parts of Sylhet. It should also be remembered that the capital of the Candras was Vikramapura. Keeping these facts in mind we may generalise that the Candras ruled independently in south-eastern Bengal with their headquarters at Vikramapura, and their contemporary Pāla rulers ruled in north, north-western and south-western parts of Bengal. So it is obvious that their administrative unit, *Paṇḍra/Paṇḍravardhana bhukti* was definitely different from the *Puṇḍravardhana bhukti* of the Pāla records. On the basis of this finding we may suggest that the Candras may have named their territorial division after the old and well-known division of Bengal. It was probably a case of change or duplication of place names, which was not uncommon. *Kāambojadesā* in 'Tibet'<sup>91</sup> or in Lushai Hills<sup>92</sup> and modern Cambodia may be cited as examples of such transference of names.

An alternative suggestion can also be made. Long ago F. E. Pargiter<sup>93</sup> analysing literary evidence from the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*, where he found separate mention of the *Paṇḍras* along with the *Puṇḍras*, postulated about the possibility of *Paṇḍra* being an area different from *Puṇḍra*. He concluded, ". . . it follows that *Paṇḍra* must have lain on the south side of the Ganges, and *Puṇḍra* on the north side, between *Anga* and *Viṅga*."<sup>94</sup> He locates *Paṇḍra* in the Santal Parganas, Birbhum and a portion of Hazaribagh district and *Puṇḍra* in Purnea, Maldah, Rajshahi and Dinajpur. He further postulated that the *Paṇḍras* were presumably an offshoot of the *Puṇḍras*, the latter established themselves in the region north of the Ganges and the former crossed the river and formed a sister kingdom under the name of *Paṇḍras*.<sup>95</sup>

B. C. Sen<sup>96</sup> accepting that "a tribal movement in the case of the *Puṇḍras*

seems to have been more than probable", dilates inconclusively on the identity or difference of the Puṇḍras and Pauṇḍras. In view of the fact that the origin of the name of the *bhukti* in the Candra epigraphs cannot be explained by the extension of Pāla rule in the region of south-eastern Bengal the idea of tribal movement, subsequent settlement of a branch of the Puṇḍras in a region south of the Ganges and consequent naming of the area of habitation after the original tribal name may be given some credence. This would also explain the reason for the duplication of name, suggested earlier.

One thing remains to be explained. How did the name Pauṇḍra appear in Madanapāla's plate, whereas all the plates of his predecessors invariably record Puṇḍra? We have earlier suggested that Pāla rule may have extended to south-eastern Bengal in the period between Mahīpāla I and Mahīpāla II. This suzerainty over south-eastern Bengal, after the end of Candra rule, acquainted people of Pāla administration with the term Pauṇḍravardhana. The composer and scribe of the Manahali plate in putting Pauṇḍra, demonstrated their acquaintance. However, it must be said that no explanation, except a scribal mistake, is necessary.

The Varmans, who ruled in south-eastern Bengal, continued to use the name Pauṇḍra, following the practice of the Candras. If Bhattasali's suggestion about the identification of Adhaḥpattana *maṇḍala* with Khāḍī *maṇḍala* (24 Parganas) is accepted, we have to think of an extension of the Varman territory in the region of south-western Bengal. However, it must be said that it is extremely difficult to enunciate the exact sway of the territory of the Varmans from available records, and for that matter, of the Candras as well.

The Senas held the entire area of Bengal under their control with their headquarters at Vikramapura. It is likely that they took possession of south-eastern Bengal before they could terminate Pāla rule from northern Bengal." They took up the term Pauṇḍra, following the tradition of south-eastern Bengal, and applied it in all their records. It appears that Pauṇḍravardhana *bhukti* of the Sena records had the wide expansive territorial connotation embracing regions of northern, south-western and south-eastern Bengal. With the occupation of these regions the Sena rulers found the names of two *bhuktis*, with almost similar names, preferred to use one, but, at the same time, felt the necessity of inserting terms like *varendryām*, *Vyāghratyām*, *Vaṅge nāvyē* and *vaṅge vikramapura bhāge* in their records for denoting the location of the lands. It is interesting to note that all the Sena records granting lands in either northern or south-eastern regions contain such identifying terms." The three plates, which do not contain such terms, grant lands in south-western Bengal," and for some reasons they did not feel the necessity of putting any identifying term. Possibly the names Khāḍī or



Vyāghrataṭī were too well known to require any such term. Vyāghrataṭī is put as *vyāghrataṭyām*, signifying the location of the lands rather than any administrative division or district.

If the suggested identification of Vyāghrataṭī with some area of south-western Bengal is correct, the Pāla administrative division of Puṇḍravardhana may be said to connote territories of northern Bengal with parts of south-western Bengal included in it. It will be reasonable to think that Vyāghrataṭī, included in Puṇḍravardhana, should be contiguous with the region of north Bengal and on this ground Bhattasali's surmise about its identification with Purnea district may be given serious reconsideration. The territory denoted by Puṇḍra *bhukti* of the Candra and the Varman records should be taken to be in south-eastern Bengal. The wide connotation is applicable to the Sena records. This happened as a result of amalgamation of the two *bhuktis* of more or less similar names under one rule. But the necessity was felt for the use of identifying terms for denoting proper location.

## NOTES &amp; REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> *History of Bengal*, Vol. I (HB-I), Dacca, 1943, p. 195.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.
- <sup>5</sup> *Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1942, p. 105.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 562.
- <sup>7</sup> *Bāṅgālir Itihās, Adi Patra*, (Abridged Edition), Calcutta, 1873 B.S., pp. 60-66.
- <sup>8</sup> 'The New Saktipur Grant of Lakṣmana Sena Deva and Geographical Divisions of Ancient Bengal'. *JRAS*, 1935, pp. 74-85.
- <sup>9</sup> *EL*, XXXVII, p. 294.
- <sup>10</sup> *Pakistan Archaeology (PA)*, No. III, 1967, p. 24.
- <sup>11</sup> R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *HB-I*, p. 24.
- <sup>12</sup> *EL*, XXI, p. 83; D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, Calcutta, 1942, p. 82-83.
- <sup>13</sup> H. C. Raychandhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 275, fn. 1.
- <sup>14</sup> *EL*, XV, 130ff; *Select Inss.*, 283ff. Dāmodarpur is in Dinajpur district.
- <sup>15</sup> Koṭivarsa has been identified with Bāṅgarā of Dinajpur district. Cf. B. C. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 106ff; D. C. Sircar, *Select Inss.*, p. 284, fn. 1. Regarding the *bhukti* D. C. Sircar writes, [It] "comprised Bogra, Rajshahi-Dinajpur region of North Bengal, though in a later period it also included parts of Eastern and Southern Bengal."
- <sup>16</sup> *EL*, XV, p. 133ff; XVII, p. 193; *Select Inss.*, 285ff.
- <sup>17</sup> *EL*, XXI, p. 78ff; *Select Inss.*, 342ff. Though the *bhukti* is not mentioned, it may be taken to refer to the Puṇḍravardhana because of the location of Baigrām and Pañcanagarī in the Bogra district.
- <sup>18</sup> *Select Inss.*, p. 342, fn. 6.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 342, fn. 4; D. C. Sircar, *IHQ*, XIX, 15; M. Gupte, *JAS L*, XVII, pp. 122-23.
- <sup>20</sup> *EL*, XX, 61ff; *Select Inss.*, 337ff. Pāhārpur is in Rajshahi district.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *EL*, XV, 135ff; *Select Inss.*, 324ff.
- <sup>23</sup> *EL*, XV, 138ff; *Select Inss.*, 328ff.
- <sup>24</sup> A territorial unit—a forest. cf. *Ibid.*, p. 329, fn. 2. Also taken to denote the hilly region on the northern fringe of Bengal.
- <sup>25</sup> *EL*, XV, 142ff; *Select Inss.*, 337ff.
- <sup>26</sup> It may be Brindakoorce, 14 miles to the north of Dāmodarpur. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 339, fn. 4.
- <sup>27</sup> S. Beal, *Records*, II, pp. 194-195.

## EARLY BENGAL EPIGRAPHS<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is no difference of opinion among scholars. Cf. Niharrajan Ray, *Bāngalīr Itihās, Ādi Parva*, (Abridged Edition), p. 66; R. C. Majumdar, *HB-I*, p. 49; B. C. Sen, *Some Historical Aspect of the Inscriptions of Bengal*, 104ff; N. K. Bhattachali, *JRAS*, 1935, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> For the chronology of the dynasties of Bengal the present author's *Dynastic History of Bengal*, Dacca, 1967, has been followed.

<sup>3</sup> *El*, IV, 243ff. Khālimpur is in Malda district.

<sup>4</sup> It also appears in the Nālandā plate of Devapāla. Balavarman, the *dūtaka* of the plate, was the overlord of Vyāghrataṭī maṇḍala, *El*, XVII, pp. 318 ff. Cunningham identified it with Bāgḍī, in the Presidency Division including Sundarban (Archaeological Survey Reports, XV, pp. 145-46). Bhattachali surmised about its identification with Purnea district, west of the Majhānandā (*JRAS*, 1935, pp. 75-76). R. C. Majumdar places it in Midnapur-Vishnupur region (*HB-I*, p. 217). However, it must be said that its identification is not certain.

<sup>5</sup> *JAS L*, XVII, 138ff. Jajlparā is in Dinajpur district.

<sup>6</sup> *El*, XXIX, 1ff.

<sup>7</sup> Gupta plate No. 3. *Supra*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *El*, XIV, 324ff; *JAS L*, XVII, 117ff. Bāngarh is in Dinajpur district.

<sup>9</sup> *El*, XXIX, 9ff; *JAS L*, XVII, 132ff. Belwā is in Dinajpur district.

<sup>10</sup> *JAS L*, XVII, p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> *El*, XV, 293ff. Amgāchi is in Dinajpur district.

<sup>12</sup> *JASB*, LXIX, 66ff. Manahali is in Dinajpur district. There is doubt about the reading of the name of the village.

<sup>13</sup> A general idea about the location of the lands granted cannot be formed in respect of two records, the Khālimpur and Jajlparā plates. The suggested identification of Vyāghrataṭī with regions in south-western Bengal, if correct, would possibly connote an extension of the *bhukti* in that region.

<sup>14</sup> Recent discoveries have given us a clear picture of these rulers of south-eastern Bengal. In the absence of sources the history of this region was generally confused with the history of the Pālas. But now it is possible to reconstruct the history of this region. For details see A. M. Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal*, Chapter IV.

<sup>15</sup> *El*, XII, 136ff; N. G. Majumdar, *Inscription of Bengal*, Vol. III, (IB-III), 1ff. Rāmpāl is in Dacca district.

<sup>16</sup> It could be *nāvya maṇḍala*.

<sup>17</sup> *El*, XXXIII, 134ff; IB-III, pp. 165-66.

<sup>18</sup> *JRAS*, 1935, pp. 76-77.

<sup>19</sup> *El*, XXVIII, p. 137.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 51ff. Madanpur is near Savar in Dacca district.

<sup>21</sup> Proper meaning cannot be grasped. But the name Vaṅgasāgara is interesting.

<sup>22</sup> *El*, XVII, pp. 189-90. Idilpur is in Faridpur District.

<sup>23</sup> *HB-I*, pp. 195-96.

<sup>24</sup> *El*, XVII, p. 189.

<sup>25</sup> *El*, XXXVII, 289ff; Karmalakanta Gupta, *Copper-Plates of Sylhet*, Sylhet, 1967, 81ff.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 133ff; *El*, XXXVII, pp. 294-95.

<sup>27</sup> *Unpublished*. A. H. Dani discovered it. We have used Dani's reading.

<sup>28</sup> Dani read it. Could it be Bhāṭī?

<sup>29</sup> *Pakistan Archaeology*, No. III, 1967, 22ff.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Maināmatī is in Comilla district.

<sup>32</sup> *IHQ*, IX, 282ff.

<sup>33</sup> *HB-I*, pp. 85-86, fn 4.

<sup>34</sup> In all ten records have so far been discovered. One plate, the Kedārpur plate of Śrīkandra, has been left out from discussion, because the plate is incomplete. Only the genealogical portion was inscribed and was intended to be a future land grant. cf. *El*, XVII, 188ff.

<sup>35</sup> If the maṇḍalas mentioned in the Rāmpāl and Dacca plates are taken as Nāvya and Bhāṭī respectively, the possibility of which cannot be ruled out, Paṇḍra *bhukti* of all the Candra plates could be said to connote areas in south-eastern Bengal.

<sup>36</sup> *El*, XXX, 255ff.

<sup>37</sup> *El*, XII, 37ff; IB-III, 15ff. Belāva is in Dacca district.

<sup>38</sup> *JASB (NS)*, X, 125.

<sup>39</sup> *JRAS*, 1935, 83ff.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>41</sup> *El*, XV, 278ff; IB-III, 57ff. Barrackpur is in 24 Parganas district.

- <sup>10</sup> *HB-I*, pp. 25-26; *JRAS*, 1935, 79ff.
- <sup>11</sup> *JRAS*, 1935, 79ff.
- <sup>12</sup> *IB-III*, 81ff.
- <sup>13</sup> It appeared in the Pāla records. See *supra*, 6 fn 3.
- <sup>14</sup> *EI*, XII, 6ff; *IB-III*, 99ff. Tarpanlghi is in Dinaipur district.
- <sup>15</sup> *IB-III*, 106ff. Madhainagar is in Pabna.
- <sup>16</sup> *EI*, XXVI, 1ff. Bhowal is in Dacca district.
- <sup>17</sup> The reading is doubtful, *Ibid.*, p. 8 fn 2.
- <sup>18</sup> *IB-III*, 169ff. N. K. Bhattachali seems to have located the villages. cf. *JRAS*, 1935, 82ff.
- <sup>19</sup> *IB-III*, 140ff. Found in the neighbourhood of Dacca.
- <sup>20</sup> *IB-III*, 132ff. *JASB*, 1896, 6ff. Madanpādā is in Faridpur district.
- <sup>21</sup> *JASB*, 1896, 6ff.
- <sup>22</sup> *IB-III*, 118ff. Edilpur is in Faridpur district.
- <sup>23</sup> A. M. Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal*, 240ff.
- <sup>24</sup> Only one record of the Pālas, Manahali grant of Madanapāla, records the name as Paupdravardhana. Some explanation can be offered for this. This will be discussed later.
- <sup>25</sup> D. C. Sircar, *EI*, XXXIII, 137ff, *EI*, XXXVII, p. 294; Niharranjan Ray, *Bāṅgālī Itihās* (Abridged Edition), 60ff; N. K. Bhattachali, *JRAS*, 1935, 73ff; R. C. Majumdar, *HB-I*, pp. 195-96, 280; B. C. Sen, *Some Historical Aspects of The Inscriptions of Bengal*, 104ff; H. C. Raychaudhuri, *HB-I*, pp. 24-26.
- <sup>26</sup> See A. M. Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal*, 16ff, 139ff; *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Dacca, X, 35ff.
- <sup>27</sup> *IHQ*, XXVIII, 57.
- <sup>28</sup> A. M. Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, 62ff, 139ff. Also see the author's article on 'Pāla-Candra Relationship', *Journal of the Varendra Research Museum*, Rajshahi, Vol. II, 1973, 75ff.
- <sup>29</sup> *EI*, XVII, 353-55; *IC*, IX, 121-24.
- <sup>30</sup> D. C. Sircar suggested this. *IC*, IX, p. 124.
- <sup>31</sup> A. M. Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, 180ff.
- <sup>32</sup> V. A. Smith, *The Early History of India*, 4th Edn., p. 193.
- <sup>33</sup> S. C. Das (ed.), *Pag Sam Jon Zang*, Part I, pp. 4, 74 and Index, p. 10.
- <sup>34</sup> *JASB*, LXVI, 1897, 85ff.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.
- <sup>37</sup> *Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal*, 127ff.
- <sup>38</sup> Though it is not possible to reconstruct the exact sequence of events in the rise of Vijayasena, a suggestion to this effect can be made.
- <sup>39</sup> The Bhowāl grant does not contain any such term. But we have argued earlier that the lands granted by it should be in south-eastern Bengal.
- <sup>40</sup> In Khādī *maṇḍala* and in Vyāghrataṭī. Suggestions have been made of their location in south-western Bengal.

# Village Life in Early Medieval Bengal: A Study Based on the Subhasitaratnakosa

SHAHANARA HUSAIN

THE *Subhāṣitaratnakosa*, an anthology of Sanskrit poems compiled by a Buddhist scholar named Vidyākara, seems to unfold a kaleidoscopic view of the village life in early medieval Bengal. The researches of D. D. Kosambi<sup>1</sup> have shown that the *Kavindravacanasaṃuccaya*, edited and published in 1912 by F. W. Thomas in the Bibliotheca Indica from a palmleaf manuscript discovered by Haraprasad Sastri, was a fragment of the *Subhāṣitaratnakosa* and represents the later edition of it.

Details about Vidyākara, the compiler of the *Subhāṣitaratnakosa*, are unknown to us. He was a Buddhist scholar of Bengal and lived in the latter half of the 11th and first half of the 12th century A.D. Most probably he was an abbot or clergyman of high office at the Jagaddala *Mahāvihāra* in Varendrī.<sup>2</sup> The anthology seems to have been compiled by him at the same *Mahāvihāra* and he drew on the *vihāra* library in making his anthology. Some verses in the *Subhāṣitaratnakosa* seem to be his own.<sup>3</sup>

The *Subhāṣitaratnakosa* has come down to us in two versions. The first version seems to have been compiled in 1100 A.D. and the expanded edition not later than about 1130 A.D. The anthology contains 1738 verses and is divided into 50 *Vrajyās* or sections. From the point of view of content Vidyākara's collection is wide. It begins with verses in praise of the Buddha followed by verses on the other Buddhist deities as well as Brahmanical gods and goddesses.<sup>4</sup> The anthology also contains verses on the seasons, the periods of human life, love, sunset, darkness, the moon and dawn, good men, villains, poverty and praise of kings.

In compiling the *Subhāṣitaratnakosa* Vidyākara draws most heavily on the Sanskrit plays, *Khaṇḍakāvya*s and sparingly from *mahākāvya*s and stray verses.<sup>5</sup> Of the 275 authors<sup>6</sup> of Vidyākara's anthology only 11 belonged to a period earlier than the 7th century A.D. and all the others were most probably

of a period ranging from the 8th to 11th centuries A.D. Secondly, most of them were Bengalis or at least easterners of the time of the Pāla rule. The celebrated poets like non-easterners Kālidāsa, Rājaśekhara, Bhavabhūti are quoted in the *Subhāṣitaratnaḥa*. But we also find verses of Vallāṇa, Yogeśvara, Vasukalpa, Manovinoda, Abhinanda, Vīryamitra, Lakṣmīdhara, Jitārinandin, Jitāripāda and many others who were most probably Bengalis. Verses of some royal poets like Vijayapāla, Harṣapāladeva and Ratipāla and Buddhist abbots like Buddhākaragupta, Khipaka and Jñanaśrī are also quoted by Vidyākara. The Bengali poets mentioned above and many others seem to have flourished in the Pāla period and poets like Yogeśvara, Manovinoda were court poets of the Pālas.

As a literary source of history the *Subhāṣitaratnaḥa* or the Treasury of Well-Turned Verses may be considered a treasury of materials for reconstructing especially the social history of early medieval Bengal. Though representing the poetic tradition of the Pāla court and abbey it also contains poetry of village and field which are also found in the later anthology entitled the *Saduktikarnāṃṛta*.<sup>7</sup> There are also other verses dealing with society which give vivid glimpses especially of the village life in early medieval Bengal.

With the eighth section in the *Subhāṣitaratnaḥa* begins observation and recording of the phenomena of the different seasons. Vidyākara has included in his verses on seasons charming scenes of the villages and village life. In spring time we find the cuckoo singing, the blossoming of the mango, the buzzing bees, and the lily buds in tanks and ponds.<sup>8</sup> The day also gradually becomes long at the expense of night.<sup>9</sup> There are flowers a plenty like *Aśoka*, *Kunda*, *Kimśuka*, *Campaka* and *Bakula*.<sup>10</sup> In summer ponds and wells dry up and there are blasts of hot, dry wind.<sup>11</sup> The girl attendant at the well sings.<sup>12</sup> There is coolness on the wayside pond and travellers come here at noon to have a drink of water.<sup>13</sup>

After summer comes the monsoon rains. We find in one of the verses of the *Subhāṣitaratnaḥa*, description of the banana tree, parched by summer, drinking "as if with cupped hands the heavy rains".<sup>14</sup> The heat-oppressed birds are also sporting with fresh rain water.<sup>15</sup> The monsoon is a happy time for the village children too and smeared with mud and with sticks in their hands they are running after the rising fish in the flooded paddy field which is full of croaking frogs.<sup>16</sup> Like the paddy fields the river banks are also in flood which make the heart of poet Yogeśvara gay:<sup>17</sup>

The river banks in flood make my heart gay;  
Where moorhen cries, the snake lies sleeping  
On the canoe tops,  
The gray geese call and herds of antelope  
Gather in peaceful circles;

Where thick grass growing everywhere is bent beneath the  
Swarms of ants

And the jungle fowl is mad with joy.

The monsoon is also a time of rest and the happy village young man in the nights of monsoon lies with his wife in his thatched pavilion over the room of which grows pumpkin vines and he listens in her embrace to the constant downpour of rains.<sup>18</sup>

In the autumn as the waters gradually shrink the river banks, streaked with wagtails, rise within the streambed.<sup>19</sup> The days are sweet in the villages with ripening of sugarcane, the village fields are ripe with corns and the wagon track is marked with juice from crushed cane.<sup>20</sup> With the time of harvesting coming near the farmers build platforms along the field breaks to drive off wild boars and bedecked with jewelry made of autumn flowers the village girl also guards the rice.<sup>21</sup> On moonlit nights the herd of white cows grazes in the village meadows green with fresh grass.<sup>22</sup> In the house of the rich there are feasts in which the Brahmins are overfed.<sup>23</sup>

In the early winter the round villages are charming at the end of a day with heaped up rice and lowhanging smoke of dung fires.<sup>24</sup> The peasants are haughty and proud being flattered by travellers for their straw.<sup>25</sup> The reapers of rice chase after rabbits with sickles, slings and sticks.<sup>26</sup> In a grass hut at the corner of the field sleep the peasant and his wife with coverlet and pillow made of barley straw.<sup>27</sup> At the end of the day the peasant women enjoy the warmth of the fire of cow dung.<sup>28</sup> But miserable is the lot of the poor old woman shivering in her hut all day and night.<sup>29</sup>

In the late winter (*śiśira*) the peasant life is full with happiness:

Now may one prize the peasant houses happy  
in the harvest of the winter rice  
and sweet with perfume from jars of new-stored grain;  
where the farmgirls take the pounder,  
raise and shake and smoothly drop it,  
their bracelets jingling as they raise their arms.<sup>30</sup>

And in the village fields:

The mustard sways with branchlets  
weighed down by spike-shaped pods;  
children standing underneath the tree  
can pick the jujubes from the bending branch;  
the Puṇḍra sugar cane, its joint appearing  
from the loosening of the sheath in ripeness,  
spits forth its juice beneath the hand-turned press.<sup>31</sup>

The late winter also beholds the jasmine festival (*Kundacaturthikā*) when the women preparing pastry cakes and bedecking themselves give the

cry "*ulū ulū ulū*" that calls for love.<sup>33</sup> But life is full of misery for the poor who in their rags and trembling knees envy the rich ones blessed with good food and other joys of life.<sup>33</sup>

We find miniatures of village life in early medieval Bengal in some other verses of the *Subhāṣitaratnaḥaṣa*. The *Pāmarī* draws water from the well while her shell bracelets jingle.<sup>34</sup> The women sing while husking the winter rice.<sup>35</sup> The dairy boy milks the cow and

"Sweet is the sound of the milk, my dear,  
as its stream squirts into the jar  
held in the vice of his lowered knees."<sup>36</sup>

In heavy rains and wind a bull with twisted horns forces his way into the *Pāmara's* house.<sup>37</sup>

The villages described in Vidyākara's anthology charm our hearts:

They charm the heart, these villages of the upper lands.  
white from the saline earth that covers everything  
and redolent with frying chickpeas.  
From the depths of their cottages  
comes the deep rumble of a heavy handmill  
turning under the fair hands of a *Pāmara* girl  
in the full bloom of youth.<sup>38</sup>

Side by side with the scenes of the happy and contented village life we also find descriptions of villages deserted by all but a few families due to the oppression of the cruel district lord (*bhogapati*):

When villages are left by all but a few families  
wasting under undeserved disaster  
from a cruel district lord  
but still clinging to ancestral lands,  
villages without grass, where walls are crumbling  
and the mongoose wanders through the lanes;  
they yet show their deepest sadness  
in a garden filled with cooing of gray doves.<sup>39</sup>

Vidyākara also includes in his anthology verses on poverty which give glimpses into the misery of a poor man and his suffering family. There can be no doubt that these descriptions are applicable to the poor people of the village as well as poor townsfolk. The starving children of the poor look like corpses and everyday the wife of the poor man is being scorned by her well-off neighbour for begging a needle to mend her tattered dress and this scorn hurts the poor man most.<sup>40</sup> When the old sick ox which is the only wealth of a poor family falls down the whole family tries to pull him up:

Father and son take each a horn, the grandparents the flanks,  
the mother takes the tail, the children each a foot

and the son's wife pushes on the dewlap.

One sick old ox is all the wealth that fate has left the family;

and now he's down, they are all in tears to pull him up.<sup>41</sup>

The poor man looks forward to happier days when with the coming of the rains plentiful gourds and pumpkins will grow and they will be able to have food like kings:

Somehow, my wife, you must keep us and the children  
alive until the summer months are over.

The rains will come then, making gourds and  
pumpkins grow a plenty  
and we shall fare like kings.<sup>42</sup>

But the rain also brings distress for the poor housewife:

When the rain pours down on the decrepit house  
she dries the flooded barley grits  
and quiets the yelling children;  
she bails out water with a potsherd  
and saves the bedding straw.

With a broken winnowing basket on her head  
the poor man's wife is busy everywhere.<sup>43</sup>

Thus the *Subhāṣitaratnakōṣa* gives us a panorama of village life in early medieval Bengal depicting vividly its villages in different seasons, its peasants happy with harvest and its poor people groaning under poverty.

#### NOTES & REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnakōṣa*, ed. by D. D. Kosambi and V. V. Gokhale, Harvard Oriental Series, 42, Introduction, pp. xvi and xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> The great monastery of Jagaddala was the last great seat of Buddhist learning founded by a Pāla King, most probably Rāmapāla (c. 1082-1124 A.D.). It was a great centre of Tantric Buddhism and maintained lively intercourse with Tibet and there is also evidence of Tibetan translations of Sanskrit texts being actually prepared here. Many Buddhist Tantric writers like Dānaśīla, Mokṣakaragupta, Bibhūticandra flourished in this monastery. Rāmapāla's court poet Sandhyākaranandī mentions the Jagaddala *Mahāvihāra* while describing the glories of varendrī or northern Bengal. But the exact location of this monastery is not known to us. According to some scholars it was situated in Rāmavati, the capital city of Rāmapāla on the banks of the river Gaṅgā. But this view is not accepted by other scholars. The name Jagaddala is still borne by a small village in Malda district a few miles east of the present border between West Bengal and Bangladesh. A village in the Bagura district of Bangladesh is also called Jagaddala and it contains a mound which has not yet been excavated. See R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *The History of Bengal*, vol. I, University of Dacca, Second Impression 1963, pp. 336-337; R. C. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 383, 325, 326; S. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, 1962, 376ff; *The Rāmācarita*, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and others, Rajshahi, 1939, III, 7, pp. 81-82.

<sup>3</sup> *Subhāṣitaratnakōṣa*, *op. cit.* Preface, p. vii, Introduction, pp. xxx-xxxix, xxvii; *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*, Vidyākara's "*Subhāṣitaratnakōṣa*", translated by Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Harvard Oriental Series, 44, 1965, Preface, p. v, General Introduction, pp. 30-31; Daniel H. H. Ingalls, *A Sanskrit Poetry of Village and Field; Yogesvara and His Fellow Poets*, J.A.O.S., 74, p. 119. See also Sureś Candra Vandopādhyāya, *Sanskṛta Sahitye Rāṅgālir Dān*, Calcutta, 1969 (B.S.) 53ff.



<sup>4</sup> In fact Vidyākara includes greater number of verses on deities of Brahmanic pantheon. This seems to be an evidence of the catholic spirit towards religion which was the characteristic of the Pāla Bengal as well as an indication of the Brahmanic influence upon the Mahāyāna Buddhism of the time.

<sup>5</sup> See Ingalls, *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*, op. cit., pp. 33-49.

<sup>6</sup> For details about the poets quoted in the *Subhāṣitaratnakōṣa* see the ed. by D. D. Kosambi and Gokhale, Introduction, pp. lxii-cvi; Ingalls, *Anthology*, pp. 32-33; Śrī Sukumār Sen, *Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itihāsa, Prathama Khaṇḍa-Pūrvārdha*, Calcutta, 3rd edition, 1963, p. 34; J. Gonda, *J.A.O.S.*, 87, p. 97. See also Sureś Candra Vandopādhyāya, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

<sup>7</sup> The *Saduktikarṇāmyā* was compiled in Bengal in the year 1206 A.D. (1127 V.S.) by Śrīdharaḍāsa, son of Vaṭudāsa, who was the chief feudatory (*Mahāsamanatadūḍamaṇi*) writer and close friend of Lakṣmaṇasena. See the *Saduktikarṇāmyā*, ed. by Pandit Ramavatara Sharma, Motilal Banarasi Das, Lahore, 1903, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ingalls, *Anthology*, Sec. 8, v.v. 162, 171, 152, 156, 159, 169, 177, 159, 163, 173, 182, pp. 114, 116, 117, 112, 113, 114, 115-116, 117, 114, 114-115, 173, 118.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, v.v. 167, 181, pp. 115, 118.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 175, 177, 159, 162, 156, 163, 167; pp. 117, 114, 113, 114-115.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Sec. 9, vv. 208, 206, 198, pp. 124, 123, 122.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 197, pp. 121-122.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 206, p. 123.

<sup>14</sup> Ingalls, *Anthology*, Sec. 10, v. 258, p. 134.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 238, p. 131.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 226, p. 129.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 221, p. 128.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 230, p. 130.

<sup>19</sup> Ingalls, *Anthology*, Sec. 11, v. 268, p. 137.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 291, 282, pp. 141, 139.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 285, 287; p. 140.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 279, p. 139.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 291, p. 141.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Sec. 12, v. 303, p. 144.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 297, 305, pp. 143, 144.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 300, p. 143.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 299, p. 143.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 302, p. 144.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 301, p. 144.

<sup>30</sup> Ingalls, *Anthology*, Sec. 13, v. 314, p. 147.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 316, p. 147.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 306, p. 145. See also notes on this verse in *Ibid.*, p. 492.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 312, 313, pp. 146, 147.

<sup>34</sup> Ingalls, *Anthology*, Sec. 35, v. 1152, p. 329.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 1178, p. 334.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 1157, p. 330.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 1176, p. 333.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 1173, p. 333.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 1175, p. 333.

<sup>40</sup> Ingalls, *Anthology*, Sec. 39, v. 1307, p. 359.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 1317, p. 361.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 1306, p. 359.

<sup>43</sup> Ingalls, *Anthology*, Sec. 39, v. 1312, p. 360.

# Buddhist Bengal, and After

TREVOR LING

THE aim of this paper is to present some considerations which have the effect of modifying what the present writer has suggested elsewhere with regard to the so-called 'decline' of Buddhism in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Three matters in particular call for special attention in the later history of Buddhism in Bengal:

- (1) the role of the brahmins;
- (2) the degree of the popularisation of Buddhism, and of syncretism in Buddhist ideas and practices;
- (3) the role of Islam.

It is clear that the Buddhist sangha was flourishing in Bengal in the seventh century of the Christian Era, when the Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsang travelled extensively throughout the area which now comprises West Bengal and Bangladesh and described in detail the condition of Buddhism in all the places he visited. In four kingdoms, in central, eastern, south-western and western Bengal he found a well-cultivated and prosperous countryside, thickly populated towns, and numerous monasteries, often with large and well-preserved stupas some dating from the Aśokan period. In each of these kingdoms there were considerable numbers of bhikkhus. Huien Tsang's carefully recorded figures show an average in places of some one hundred, in other places two hundred, in others even more, in each vihāra. He mentions explicitly that some were Hīnayāna and some Mahāyāna.<sup>2</sup>

Archaeological evidence corroborates the wide extent of the Buddhist presence in Bengal in the pre-Muslim period. The remains of stupas in brick, in bronze and in stone have been found in various parts of the region.<sup>3</sup> As for monasteries, the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims suggest that 'there is no doubt that the whole of Bengal was studded with them in ancient times'<sup>4</sup> and where ruins of these buildings have been unearthed the nature of the remains has confirmed the details of the Chinese accounts. Another valuable source of evidence are the copper-plate inscriptions which have been found at various times in the modern period. These refer usually to grants or donations of land, sometimes to Buddhist, sometimes to non-Buddhist recipients,

and cover the period from the fifth to the thirteenth century. The grants to Buddhist institutions were mostly in the eastern part of Bengal, but there is no evidence to suggest that Buddhism was declining there during that period.<sup>5</sup> An example from the eleventh century is the Rāmpāla Copper-plate of Śricandra, found in Dacca District. The inscription, which is in Sanskrit, records a royal grant of land to a brahman. The invocatory first verse, however, is in Buddhist terms:

om svasti  
vanddho jinaḥ sa bhagavan-karuṇaika-pātram  
dharmmopyasan vijayate jagadekadīpaḥ  
yatsevayā sakala eva mahānubhāvaḥ  
saṃsārapāramupagacchati bhikṣusaṅghaḥ<sup>6</sup>

It is noteworthy that the immediate focus of this invocatory verse is on the bhikṣusaṅgha, that its characteristic is held to be that it 'transcends mundane existence' (saṃsārapāramupagacchati), and that it does so by its devotion to the Buddha and the Dharma. In other words the form of Buddhism which is here implied, in this royal inscription of eleventh century Bengal, is of a traditional kind so far as institutional forms are concerned.

Another important source for knowledge of Buddhism in Bengal, particularly during the period of the Pāla kings (that is from the eighth to twelfth century), is Tāranātha's history. It is true, as D. Chattopadhyaya comments, that Tāranātha includes much that is of a legendary character, but in spite of this, he 'somehow or other managed to squeeze into this brief work a tremendous amount of solid historical data (and interesting Indian folklore) which are not easy to trace in other available sources'.<sup>7</sup>

Tāranātha divides his history into chapters, each chapter dealing with the region of one king, but sometimes more in the case of less important reigns. In each chapter he mentions the outstanding ācārya-s of the period under review. In the chapters dealing with the Pāla kings there is frequent mention of two Buddhist schools in particular: Prajñā-pāramitā and Tantra, although he does mention also teachers of Vinaya and of Abhidharma. He tells us that in the reign of King Devapāla (810-850 C.E.), Mañjuśrīkīrti was a great Vajrācārya. In his son Rāsapāla's reign there was a great ācārya whose Tantrika name was Līlāvajra, and who 'delivered many sermons on the Tantra-yāna . . .'. According to Tāranātha, King Rāsapāla was succeeded by his son, Dharmapāla, who, we are told, accepted as his preceptors the ācārya-s Haribhadra and Jñānapāda, 'and filled all directions with the Prajñā-pāramitā and the Śrī Guhya-samāja. He built fifty centres for the study of the Dharma, thirty five of which were for Prajñā-pāramitā. He also built the Vikramaśīla vihāra on the northern bank of the Ganga, (possibly somewhere in the region of the Bengal/Bihar border). This had a central

temple containing 'a human-size statue of the Mahābodhi', and around it 'fifty-three smaller temples of the Guhya Tantra'. Moreover from the time of this king, says Tāranātha, 'the Prajñā-pāramitā was extensively propagated'. The great ācārya (Buddha) Jñānapāda, one of the king's preceptors, 'consecrated the Vikramaśīla (vihāra) and was appointed the Vajrācārya there'. In one of the temples there 'was an image of Heruka and many treatises on Tantra'. According to Tāranātha some Ceylon monks residing there declared that these Tāntrika treatises were composed by Māra, the evil one, and, indeed, felt so strongly on the subject that they burnt the treatises and smashed the silver images to pieces and used the silver fragments as money. Moreover, they warned the peoples of Bengal who came there to worship that these Tantric doctrines were simply adopted by their exponents as a way of making money, and should be avoided: 'Keep clear of these so-called preachers of the True Doctrine', they advised the lay people. When the King got to hear of this he was about to punish the Ceylon monks, but, Tāranātha tells us, they were saved by the ācārya. The latter continued to preach, 'most extensively', the five Tantras of the initiates, namely the Samāja, Māyājāla, Buddha-samuyoga, Candra-guhya-tilaka and Manjuśrī-krodha. Special emphasis was put on the teachings of the Guhya-Samāja, and so 'it was very widely spread'.

During the reign of King Mahāpāla an ācārya named Piṭo introduced the Kālacakra Tantra, and spread its teaching and practice. Another famous Tāntrika ācārya of the Pāla period mentioned by Tāranātha was Jetāri, who had been taught the Guhya-samāja by his father, a brahman ācārya and who in his turn became a great tāntrika-śāstra writer. Yet another, in Canaka's reign, was the ācārya Vāgīśvarakīrti who had held office at Vikramaśīla. He built many centres for the study of the Dharma, including eight for Prajñā-pāramitā and four for Guhya-samāja, and one each for three other forms of Tantra. 'He used to preach constantly' these doctrines, we are told. He was also famous for the elixirs which he prepared, by the use of which even the oldest could regain their youth. 'In this way he caused welfare to about five hundred ordained monks and pious householders'. In the latter part of his life he went to Nepal and preached there the Tantra-yāna. He was criticised by most of the people because he had so many consorts. Tāranātha relates some highly miraculous events in which the ācārya was involved together with two of these consorts, 'a voluptuous dancing girl' and 'a black and violent woman'.

This kind of story, of which other examples of a similar kind occur, no doubt underlie Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya's view of the condition of Buddhism during the later Pāla period. Tāranātha, he tells us, left us 'clear indications of the factors that contributed to the decline and fall of Buddhism

in India', for it had 'almost completely surrendered precisely to those beliefs and practices, as a direct rejection of which the Buddha himself had preached his original creed . . . (it) bowed down to all these [magical] beliefs and practices, and thus became practically indistinguishable from popular Hinduism so called . . . being an elaborate worship of all sorts of gods and goddesses of the popular pantheon—often under new names, but sometimes caring not even to invent any new name for them—and of indulging in all sorts of ritual practices for which the Buddha had himself expressed his unambiguous repulsion'.<sup>8</sup> It thus had no internal justification as the fad of its important and wealthy patrons; with the collapse of wealthy or royal patronage it simply disappeared, there being no 'genuine popular enthusiasm for Buddhism'.

Similar reasons for the decline and disappearance of Buddhism at the end of the Pāla period are put forward by R. C. Majumdar in his *History of Ancient Bengal*. First, he says, there was 'the change in the character of Buddhism', a change into 'the mystic forms generally referred to as Vajrayāna and Tantrayāna'. Second, royal patronage which, he says, was always an important factor in the ascendancy of religious sects, was withdrawn from Buddhists at the end of the Pāla period, with the coming of the Sen dynasty, so that Buddhism declined in consequence.<sup>9</sup>

The argument thus appears to be that the cause of Buddhism's disappearance from India was (1) that it underwent an internal change in accommodating itself to popular cults, and (2) that it had come to rely on the patronage of rich merchants and kings to such an extent that when this was withdrawn Buddhism had no vitality of its own left, no roots in the life of the people, and therefore simply died away.

Such an explanation demands careful scrutiny. In the first place it is important to enquire how the Pālas came to be patrons of Buddhism. The founder of the dynasty, Gopāla, who emerged from the political chaos of mid-eighth-century Bengal on account of his charisma as a leader is a somewhat shadowy figure. It is not known with certainty whether or not he was a Buddhist. Nor is there any clear explanation of why his son announced himself as a follower of the Buddha. One reason which must certainly be taken seriously is that he did so precisely *because* Buddhism was so widely and popularly supported throughout Bengal.<sup>10</sup> It had certainly been prospering in the seventh century, as Hiuen Tsang's evidence shows, and there seems no good reason why it should be thought to have declined in the intervening century. Indeed, the accusation against Buddhism in the Pāla period appears to be that it became *too* popular—it approximated too closely to the popular culture of Bengal. Such a view of things accounts satisfactorily for the general nature of Tāranātha's account of Pāla Buddhism also, namely that it was

popularly oriented and received patronage from friendly kings and rich merchants.

This in fact was precisely the kind of situation in which the Buddhist Sangha flourished in other periods, both before and after the Pālas, in India and in Ceylon and South-East Asia. An open frontier between on the one hand highly metaphysical matters dealt with in the Dharma and, on the other, popular contemporary beliefs is a characteristic feature of all forms of Buddhism from the earliest period. The Pali suttas, for example, represent the Buddha's attitude towards the popular beliefs and practices of the average man, the *putthujana*, as having been mainly one of his tolerant forbearance; his strictures were reserved for what he regarded as the absurdity, cruelty, and wastefulness of the Brahmanical sacrificial system.<sup>11</sup> The same attitude has been transmitted in the Sangha down the centuries and still characterises the traditional Buddhism of Ceylon and South-East Asia.

There is an inherent contradiction in saying that Buddhism declined because it had accommodated itself too much to popular cults on the one hand, and that it relied solely on royal patronage and not on popular support on the other. There would seem to be much more of a case for saying that it was not so much for lack of popular support that Buddhism declined in eastern India, but rather in spite of such support, or even, *precisely because it enjoyed such popular support*.

Popularity attracts jealousy. This is what appears to have happened in the case of Indian Buddhism. Although it is always possible to find exceptions, in general the attitude of the brahmins was one of unwillingness to share royal patronage and political influence with non-brahmanical sects. The Mānava-Śāstra and Kauṭilya's Artha-Śāstra afford plenty of evidence of this kind of attitude. The stronger the rāj, the more important it became for brahmins to establish and maintain their own position at court and in the kingdom at large. On the other hand, in a period when there was no strong, extensive rule, such as the century between the time of Hiuen Tsang and the beginning of the Pāla rule, a period characterised later, in the Khalimpur copper-plate of Dharmapāla, as *mātsyanyāyam*,<sup>12</sup> it is easy to see that the Buddhist Sangha was less likely to be dislodged, by brahmanical rivals, from the position of popularity which it held in Hiuen Tsang's time. To have done so the brahmins would in such circumstances have needed a powerful political ally, and this was not to be had during that century. Buddhism could therefore be expected to continue at the same level of popular esteem and support into the eighth century, when Gopāla established his rule in Bengal.

By the time the Muslim conquest of Bengal began, soon after the year 1200, the Sangha no longer held the position which it had enjoyed at the

beginning of and throughout the Pāla period. The crucial period is evidently the century and a half between the end of effective Pāla rule and the displacement of Lakṣmaṇa Sen by the Muslim invaders in 1206. If Buddhist institutions had declined so noticeably during the Sen period, that is, between about 1050 and 1200, it is not unreasonable to assume that the cause of the decline is to be found in some feature which was present in Bengal during the Sen period but not in the Pāla period. One does not have to look very far to find it. The Sens, unlike the Pālas, were not Bengalees; they were South Indians, and upholders of the Brahmanical system. The persecution and harrving of Buddhists by Brahmanical rulers both in north and south India at this period of Indian history is far from unknown. The anti-Buddhist activities of Śaśāṅka in north India and of Kumārila Bhatta, for example, in south India, could not, in spite of modern Brahmanical attempts to white-wash them,<sup>13</sup> have been other than severely damaging to Buddhist life and institutions, as, in accordance with the injunctions of Mānava Sāstra, they were no doubt meant to be. Similarly, the Sen dynasty in Bengal constituted a menace to the survival of Buddhist life, a menace which soon became a reality. The Sens, coming from the conservative and orthodox Deccan, were unlikely to perpetuate the social liberalism which had been encouraged during the Buddhist Pāla period. The society the Sens created was one in which caste differences were emphasised and upheld, and in which a multitude of state officials flourished at the expense of both the peasantry and the merchants. The latter were, traditionally, prominent supporters of the Buddhist Sangha, and their decline during the Sen period would inevitably have had the effect of further depressing the Buddhists, now already a depressed section of Bengal society under Pāla rule.

Those who reject the view that it was orthodox Brahmanism which brought about the decline of Buddhism in Bengal in the Sen period<sup>14</sup> offer as an alternative explanation of this decline (which, quite clearly, has to be explained somehow), the idea that Buddhism had become 'exhausted' by some sort of natural process of 'old age'. It was old and tired, and having no means of rejuvenating itself, it just died; such is the explanation offered. It 'merged' into Brahmanism, or, in S. Radhakrishnan's words, it 'perished in India, to be born again in a refined Brahmanism'.<sup>15</sup> This is not exactly the language of professional historiography. Such fanciful and figurative use of the idea of being 're-born', is, in fact, a way of saying it was *succeeded* by a renovated Brahmanism, or, simply that it was *replaced* by Brahmanism. Radhakrishnan is aware that this statement is, in any case, true only of India. Buddhism, although equally 'old' anywhere else in the world, did not expire *outside* India as it did *within* India. It did not die in Ceylon in the thirteenth century, or in Burma, or in Siam, or in Japan, or in China.



It *did* run into difficulty, however, in Brahmanical Sumatra and Java and Malaya. Significantly these were the lands which also *afterwards* became Islamic. Burma and Siam, which remained strongly Theravadin Buddhist, resisted Islamic expansion. As in Bengal, it was not Islam which overcame Buddhism, but a more jealous rival of nearer origin.

Certain other considerations are important in this connection which there is only the space to mention briefly. The Muslims who invaded Bengal from the beginning of the thirteenth century onwards did not distinguish or discriminate between Brahmanical and Buddhist religion; to them, all were 'Hindu', that is, 'Indian' or non-Muslim. There is evidence that the relations between Buddhists and Muslims were, if anything, slightly more friendly than between other 'Hindus' and Muslims. The fourteenth-century Muslim traveller, Ibn Battúta, in his account of Ceylon, writes concerning the Buddhists that 'they show respect for Muslim darwishes, lodge them in their houses, and give them to eat, they live in their houses amidst their wives and children. This is contrary, he adds, 'to the usage of the other Indian idolaters who never make friends with Muslims, and never give them to eat or to drink out of their vessels.'<sup>16</sup> If the Brahmans managed to survive the Muslim occupation of Bengal, the Buddhists could be expected to have survived also—had they still maintained the position in Bengal life they had held before the coming of the Sens. The disappearance of the Buddhists from Bengal could be attributed directly to the Muslim invasion *only* if Brahmanism also had perished at the hands of the Muslims; the latter were hardly likely to have extended special favours to the Brahmans which they withheld from the Buddhists. If both Brahmanism and Buddhism had undergone the Islamization of Bengal on equal terms, Buddhism could be expected to have survived at least equally as well as Brahmanism. This was not the case, and the only reasonable inference is that Buddhism had already been severely crippled before the Muslims reached Bengal.

As for the dying-of-old-age explanation, this is falsified by the evidence from South-East Asian Buddhism. A famous Western Buddhologist, Edward Conze, sees the history of Buddhism down to the present in terms of five periods of five hundred years. The first three of these periods, namely 500 B.C. to 0, 0 to 500 A.D., and 500 to 1000 C.E., each had its own characteristic development in Buddhist thought and practice, namely, the Old Wisdom School, the Mahayana, and the Tantra. But the latter two periods, from 1000 C.E. to the present, show no new development, says Conze. This is perhaps a somewhat Indocentric view. In South-East Asian Buddhism the period 1000 to 1500 C.E. was characterized by the emergence of the South-East Asian *Buddhist Kingdom*; such were the Buddhist kingdoms of Burma, Siam, Laos and Cambodia. These were, as nearly as has ever been achieved (and to a



greater degree than in India even under Asoka) totally Buddhist nations or societies, with no serious internal rival ideology (as *had* been the case in India), societies where Buddhist values permeated deep into the national culture. Indeed it was *for this civilizing and culture-bestowing quality that Buddhism was originally welcomed in South East Asia*.<sup>17</sup> Evidently, Buddhism was *not* dying of old age in the thirteenth century. Moreover, the most recent 500 year period has also seen a new characteristic developing in Buddhism. This is the period, from 1500 to the present, of contact with European civilization and thought. The effect was most clearly seen in Siam and Ceylon. In Siam, King Mongkut's modernising reform of the Sangha and of Buddhist thought and teaching did much to reinvigorate Siamese Buddhism and bring it into the twentieth century well equipped to meet the demands of the time. In Ceylon the emergence of what may very broadly be called a trend towards a Laymen's Buddhism has been the most notable feature, although it is still difficult to analyse properly. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence that Buddhism had *not* by the thirteenth century necessarily come to a developmental dead-end, so that all that remained for it was a graceful demise and 'rebirth' into Brahmanism. If this was untrue of Buddhism in South East Asia it was in principle untrue of Buddhism in Bengal. It was not old age that killed Buddhism in Bengal, nor was it the arrival of Islam; nor, most certainly, was it because Buddhism in Bengal had by the eleventh century ceased to be popular; rather it had become too popular in a situation where such popularity was dangerous.

## NOTES &amp; REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> In particular in his *History of Religion East and West*, (1968), pp. 304f. *The Buddha* (1973), pp. 203-07 and in Hinnells and Sharpe, *Man and His Salvation* (1973), p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> See S. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, II (1884), pp. 194-202. For a summary, see Trevor Ling, 'Buddhism in Bengal', in *Man and His Salvation*, ed. Hinnells and Sharpe, Manchester 1973.

<sup>3</sup> See R. C. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 605-09.

<sup>4</sup> Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 609.

<sup>5</sup> Barrie M. Morrison, *Political Centers and Culture Regions in Early Bengal*, University of Arizona Press, 1970, p. 154.

<sup>6</sup> 'May that Lord Buddha, the sole resort of compassion, as well as Dharma, the unique lamp of the world be victorious. Through the worship of these two the entire noble-souled association of monks transcends the bounds of mundane existence.' Ramaranjan Mukherji and Sachindra Kumar Maity, *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 226.

<sup>7</sup> Preface to *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, trsl. by Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, Simla, 1970, p. xi.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xii-xiii.

<sup>9</sup> Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 526-27.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 524: 'The establishment of the Buddhist Pāla dynasty in Bengal ... was probably facilitated by the growing dominance of Buddhism in this region.'

<sup>11</sup> See T. O. Ling, *The Buddha*, pp. 117-19 and 67ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, (see note 6), p. 96.

## BUDDHIST BENGAL AND AFTER

<sup>13</sup> As, for instance, by R. C. Mitra, in *Visvabharati Annals*, Vol. VI, 1954, pp. 126-128.

<sup>14</sup> Such as R. C. Mitra, in *loc. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 609.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Battuta: *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*, translated and selected by H. A. R. Gibb, London, 1929, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> Nihar Ranjan Ray himself suggested this to me in a personal conversation in Calcutta in February 1974. See also S. Dutt, *Buddhism in East Asia*, p. 74.



# The Cult and Rituals of Dharma Thakur

N. N. BHATTACHARYYA

THE popular cult of Dharma Thākur may be regarded as one of the outcome of the great proletarian revival which had characterised the social and religious life of eastern India from the twelfth century onwards. When Buddhism ceased to exist as Buddhism in this part of the country, many of its elements were absorbed by the existing religions like Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, but there was an independent group of cults and rituals, which had received temporary shelter under different ramifications of Buddhism and a good deal of which have survived to our day as the suppressed religion of the masses that had played a leading role in the stupendous social and religious transformation which was taking place after the decline of Buddhism and with the advent of Islam. To this group belongs the cult of Dharma Thākur which is an admixture of some relics of decaying Buddhism, a large number of popular beliefs and ceremonies, some existing Hindu ideas and practices, and elements derived also from Islam.

Regarding the antiquity of this cult we may refer to a tortoise-shell inscription of about the eleventh century A.D. which was found in the village of Vajrayogini in the Dacca district and was first published by N. K. Bhattasali<sup>1</sup> whose reading of the inscription was not, however, correct. Subsequently D. C. Sircar<sup>2</sup> edited the inscription from which it appears that a person named Manamraśarman caused a *Dharma* to be made on his behalf. The material on which the inscription is incised is also conspicuously associated with the cult of Dharma. Tortoise shells or earthen images of tortoise is still prevalent as the emblem of Dharma in the Burdwan and Presidency division of West Bengal. K. P. Chattopadhyay whose work on Dharma worship<sup>3</sup> is of great anthropological interest, examined numerous images in the districts of Birbhum, Midnapur and 24 Parganas which were shaped like

tortoises.<sup>4</sup> Sukumar Sen also points out that "the emblem of Dharma—rather his *pāda-pīṭha* on which was placed or engraved the *pādukā* (boots or sandals) of Dharma—is a tortoise. In most cases, it is a natural bit of stone shaped like a tortoise; in other cases, it is a chiselled stone image of the same."<sup>5</sup>

The Dharma cult is responsible for the creation of a type of literature in Bengali language.<sup>6</sup> From the literary works bearing on the cult of Dharma it is abundantly clear that this cult was current among the low class people like the Hāḍis, Ḍoms, Bāḡdis, fishermen, carpenters, etc. Archaeological investigations have revealed that images and temples of Dharma Ṭhākur as well as ideas and practices related to this cult are also to be found in some parts of Orissa, particularly in Mayurbhanj and its vicinities. Sukumar Sen and Panchanan Mandal point out that, although the worship of Dharma is now prevalent only in West Bengal, it was in former times also current in other parts of Bengal.<sup>7</sup> They trace it in the present day ceremony of *Del* or worship of Pāṭ Ṭhākur in east and north Bengal and point to the existence of Dharma Ṭhākur's *Gadi* in the Bogra district. They further connect the Dharma cult with the Chaṭ Parav or Śaṣṭhī-parva prevalent in Bihar.<sup>8</sup>

It was M. M. Haraprasad Sastri who played the pioneer's part in discovering the existence of such a religious cult and the literature on it. According to Sastri, the Dharma cult is the *Living Buddhism in Bengal*. He pointed out that Dharma's *dhyāna* represents the deity as *Śūnyamūrti* and *Nirañjana* which connect the cult with the theory of void, so popular with the later Buddhists, and show the latter's influence on the former.<sup>9</sup> As a popular religious cult, the worship of Dharma owes many of its elements to that form of later Buddhism which is known as Vajrayāna. The texts of the Dharma cult like the *Śūnya Purāṇa* or the *Dharma Pūjā Vidhāna* remind us of the liturgical texts of the Vajrayāna. Dr. P. C. Bagchi also thinks that the Dharma cult should be regarded as a survival of Buddhism in Bengal.<sup>10</sup> K. P. Chattopadhyaya speaks of the 'Wheel of Dharma' in connection with the Dharma Ṭhākur cult.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that the followers of the Dharma cult still observe the *Buddhapūrṇimā* (the days of the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha) and the *Āṣadhī-pūrṇimā* (the day on which *Dharmacakra* was first preached by the Buddha) as highly auspicious festive day.<sup>12</sup>

But side by side it must be admitted that the epithets *Nirañjana* and *Śūnyamūrti* on which Sastri relied so much in emphasizing the Buddhist elements may also denote different things. Since 'white disease' or leucoderma results from the curse of Dharma and since he is described as all white in form and garment, the epithets *Nirañjana* and *Śūnya* may denote as well his spotless form. This is what has been suggested by Sukumar Sen. Sastri has also confused the tortoise shape of Dharma with the form of a Buddhist

Caitya and ignored the fact that Buddhist literature does not represent Dharma in the shape of a tortoise. Buddhist scriptures represent Ādi Dharma as a *goddess* who revealed herself from the centre of a triangle and produced the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha from its three sides. Dharma that was produced from its second side is the wife of the Buddha produced from the first side, and is the mother of other Buddhas.<sup>13</sup> But these conceptions have little to do with the tortoise form of Dharma Thākura whose name, however, connects him with the Buddhist *Ratna*. In the Kailan inscription of Śrīdhara-narāta (seventh century) and the Sundarban inscription of Ḍommanapāla (twelfth century) the expression *Ratnatraya* is used to indicate a Buddhist establishment. The three *Ratnas* of the Buddhists—Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha—came to be worshipped later in Buddhist monasteries and they were represented in human forms. The Buddhist image of Dharma was that of a four-armed god sharing the *añjali* posture against the breast by one pair of hands and carrying the rosary and double lotus in the other.<sup>14</sup> Difficult to say whether this deified form of the abstract concept of Buddhist *Dharma* contributed anything to the growth of the Dharma cult of later times.

Therefore, admitting the fact of a relation between the liturgical works of the Dharma cult with those of later Buddhism, what we can say is that it bears only a faint relation to Buddhism and that the cult as a whole belongs to religious systems other than Buddhism. These religious systems also served as *accretions* on a *kernel* which was basically primitive and proletarian, as we shall presently see.

In Vedic literature the word *dharma* is used denoting various personified forms.<sup>15</sup> In Brahmanical mythology, Dharma is sometimes a separate deity (virtue, personified as a bull, dog or dove and identified with Viṣṇu or Prajāpati) and sometimes another name of Yama and Yudhiṣṭhira. No representation of an independent deity called Dharma is known.<sup>16</sup> Yudhiṣṭhira is worshipped in Madras region as Dharmarāja whose cult cannot, however be related to the Dharma cult of Bengal.<sup>17</sup> In the liturgical texts of the Dharma cult, however, the tradition of Dharma's identity with Yama seems to be very popular.

Dharma's association with the tortoise reminds us of the tortoise incarnation of Viṣṇu. Dharma is often called Svarūpanārāyaṇa. In the *Dharma-maṅgalas* we come across not only Dharma in the form of Viṣṇu of dark blue colour with four hands each containing the conch-shell, disc, mace and lotus, but also descriptions of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu in the forms of the ten incarnations of Dharma. Vaiṣṇavite myths and legends, found in the epics and Purāṇas, are sometimes attributed to the god Dharma. The identification of Dharma with Rāma in the *Dharmamaṅgalas* has been brought about mainly through the mediacy of Hanumān. But the tradition of Dharma's

identity with Viṣṇu or Rāma appears to be less popular than the tradition of his identity with Yama, Sūrya and Śiva. The Brahmanical gods whose ingredients have mostly been absorbed by Dharma are these deities as we shall see later while dealing with the cult of Kālārkarudra.

Panchanan Mandal and Sukumar Sen<sup>18</sup> suggest that the cult of the Vedic and Iranian Sun-god, Vedic Varuṇa, the war-god of such peoples as the Doms and Caṇḍālas, and several other deities, mostly non-Vedic, contributed to the origin and development of the Dharma cult. K. P. Chattopadhyay<sup>19</sup> lays greater stress on Dharma's relation with Vedic Varuṇa and the latter's association with the Sun. He also brings the Dharma Pennu of the Khonds and Dharma of the Santals in relation to the Dharma cult. As to the Solar origin of Dharma Ṭhākura, Sukumar Sen observes: "Those who have studied this cult in letter and in practice will find out readily that Dharma is the sun-god. The tortoise (*Kūrma*, *Kaśyapa*) as the symbol or emblem of the (rising?) sun is probably a non-Aryan concept. But the identification of the tortoise with the sun appears early in Indo-Aryan religion, at least as early as the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (VII.5.15). As an Aryan god, the sun moves in a chariot. So does Dharma. As a matter of fact the ceremony of *Rathayātrā* was originally connected with Dharma. Like the sun-god Dharma cures incurable disease like leucoderma. The sun-god has a bird as his *vāhana* and the god of death (Yama) is his son. Dharma's direct creation Uluka (owl) combines the two personalities. The monkey cult was originally associated with the sun worship. In the cult of the Dharma, Hanumān is his factotum. Dharma is also the Iranian sun-god. He wears *boots*, dresses like a warrior and rides a horse."<sup>20</sup>

So far as Sen's observation is concerned, the Aryan-Nonaryan question appears to be redundant. As regards the *Rathayātrā* festival, D. C. Sircar<sup>21</sup> observes that it is popular in the religious life of South India and it seems to have been brought to Eastern India by the South Indians. The Gaṅga kings appear to have popularised the *Rathayātrā* at the Puri temple and the practice seems to have spread to other Vaiṣṇava temples in these parts. But the *Rathayātrā* festival is more primitive and it was connected in different parts of the world with rain magic as Frazer has rightly shown in his *magnum opus*, *The Golden Bough*. The relation between the *Rathayātrā* and rain magic is amply indicated in the Nepalese Buddhist tradition which has a close bearing on the Nātha cult. S. Levi in his *Le Nepal* has recorded the tradition that once Gorakṣa came to Nepal in search of his *guru* Matsyendra who was no other than Avalokiteśvara Padmapāni, but as the mountain was difficult to access he tied nine serpents with a *tortoise* (the symbol of Dharma) and sat on them, as a result of which there was drought in the valley for long twelve years. Then Matsyendranātha was cleverly brought

by the king in Nepal and his presence caused rain in abundance. According to another version, Gorakṣa, being offended in Nepal, imprisoned the clouds and put them under his seat for twelve years, as a result of which there was drought and famine. By chance Matsyendra was then passing through Nepal and having seen his *guru* when Gorakṣa stood up the clouds were let loose and there was rain in abundance. Thus Matsyendra, in the form of Avalokiteśvara Padmapāni, came to be regarded with universal respect in Nepal as the bestower of rain, and his deed is celebrated, still to the present time, by the famous *Rathayātrā*.<sup>22</sup> Dharma Ṭhākur's connection with agriculture and rain is also very well-known. Sen has pointed out that Dharma is god of water as well and that barren women are bestowed with the gift of progeny by him when worshipped with austerities.

Referring to the Dharma cult of Bengal, Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji observes: "He is also a god of agriculture, and in Bengal we have a strange conception of Śiva as a farmer, a conception not found elsewhere in India, which appears to be an extension of this aspect of the divinity Dharma to Śiva when the latter came to be identified with the former. I have to note one very special thing about Dharma: his great annual festival is everywhere accompanied by ritual dances, and sometimes by mimicry and drama: without these dances by his worshippers (who usually take up a vow and observe strictly some regulations in living for a month), this annual festival (*gājan*, from *garjana*, as it is called) cannot be held. These dances are accompanied by songs, and are performed by troops of devotees."<sup>23</sup> According to Prof. Chatterji these features have very little to do with the so called Aryan or Sanskrit culture, the way of life of the higher caste Hindus. He also suggests that we should look upon the very respectable Sanskrit name *dharma* with suspicion and may ask ourselves whether the name is a Sanskritisation for some original non-Sanskrit name which had a similar sound with the Sanskrit word. An easy Sanskritisation of the Kol name *durom*, *duram* or *daram* into Dharma is quite possible.<sup>24</sup>

According to Sukumar Sen, "Śaiva Nātha cult was not entirely unconnected with Dharma worship. The four early Nātha *Siddhas* are mentioned in the cosmogony of the Dharma cult as directly created from the ashes of the body of Dharma. Durlabha Mallika's version is the earliest available form of the Maināmatī-Govindacandra legend. Therein we find the cosmogony peculiar to the cult of Dharma fully implied. Another point of contact between the two cults is the wearing of the symbolic footprints or foot gear (*pādukā*) of Dharma by the Nātha Siddhas as well as by the Dharma priests (*paṇḍita*)."<sup>25</sup>

Sen also observes: "Dharma is predominantly a war-god of fighting tribes like the Ḍom and others. According to the tradition recorded in the



ritualistic treatises Sadā, the Ḍom, was the first to worship Dharma. Next man was Āsoyā, the Garāl (*Caṇḍāla*). The latter is said to have offered to Dharma 'tanks of wine' and 'hillocks of rice cakes': *madyer puṣkarnī dilā piṣṭer jāṅgāl*. Sacrifice of animals such as goat, duck or pig is made even now in the annual *gājana* ceremony of Dharma. Wine and rice cakes are also offered. At some places the image is bathed in wine just before the commencement of the ceremony. The genuine priests of Dharma generally belong to the Ḍom or Garāl caste and comparatively rarely from other castes such as Bāuri, Dhopā, Suri, etc. Dharma was the god that was pleased only with the most cruel austerities. One had to burn incense over head, to walk over live-coals, to pierce the most delicate parts of the body with iron spikes, even through the chest before the deity relented and offered the desired gift of son. The hardest penance was self-immolation (*hākanda*), when the devotee cuts off his own head. The cult of Dharma is the quintessence of the native culture both spiritual (religious) and material. All minor native deities such as Bāsālī, Jāṅguli (i.e., Manasā), various Kṣetra-pālas, Ḍākinīs and Śākinīs gathered round Dharma as his courtiers (*āvaraṇa-devatā*) and thus obtained general recognition and worship. The legend about the origin of the cultivation of rice has insinuated itself into the grand ceremony (i.e., *gājana*). Other native industries also, such as production of molasses, smelting of copper and iron, etc. have not been overlooked. Thus in the elaborate *gājana* ceremony we witness the slow emergence of early Bengali culture in its main aspects."<sup>26</sup>

The *gājana* rituals are performed mainly, if not exclusively, by the proletarian peoples. Besides the most cruel austerities inherited from primitive religious belief,<sup>27</sup> and collective dancing, singing and drumming, which are also legacies of primitive magical practices, the *gājana* rituals contain the professional characteristics of the simpler peoples. According to the followers of the Dharma cult there are five ages—*Ṣetāi* or golden, *Nīlāi* or silver, *Kaṃsāi* or copper, *Ramāi* or iron and *Gomsāi* or age to come. This metallic classification is significant. In the liturgical texts of the Dharma cult as well as in the verses recited during the *gājana* of Śiva and Dharma, we have accounts of the origin of corn, *Beta*, double drum (*Ḍhāka*), conch (*Śaṅkha*), thread, copper, iron, earthen pots and vessels for incense and so on. The word *gājana* appears to have been derived from *garjana* meaning 'roar' which reminds us of storm and thunder, and as such the ritual in its original character might have stood for rain-magic, the most important technique of food production. Since in ancient and medieval India the villages were mainly the centres of production, and not the cities of the well-to-do persons living on the surplus supplied by the villages, these cults and rituals reveal the material culture and social institutions of the rural

proletariat. Long ago, Ram Comul Sen remarked that the word *gājana* was an abbreviation of *grāmajana* meaning the *villagers*, things rural or rustic.

According to Prof. Niharranjan Ray,<sup>28</sup> Dharma Ṭhākur is basically a primitive tribal god and his present form is due to the intermixture of countless heterogeneous elements. The god Dharma has no fixed form. Sometimes he is worshipped in the form of a crude stone. Often unused phallic form of Śiva is worshipped in the name of Dharma. The Dharma-stone bears the characteristics of the sun-stone and the phallus serving the purpose of rain and fertility charms. These functions are also shared by Śiva whose agricultural character was mainly responsible for bringing the two deities under the same roof and for treating them as identical. That is why the Śaktis of Śiva like Bāsuli, Caṇḍī, Durgā, Pārvati, etc. have been associated with Dharma who is frequently styled as Maheśvara, Mahādeva, Devadeva and the like which are commonly used epithets of Śiva.

The *gājana* of Dharma and that of Śiva have become identical. "In the book *Ādya Gambhirā* by Haridas Palit we have an elaborate account of the *gājana* of Dharma. Even a cursory glance on the verses that were sung with dancing and beating of double drums will show how confusedly Śiva and Dharma have been mixed together in these ceremonies and the verses themselves are really fragments found in the liturgical works of the Dharma cult and the Śivāyaṇas of Bengal. It is very interesting to note that this ceremony of *gājana* is also found in some districts of East Bengal in the form of Nīla Pūjā (i.e., worship of the deity Nīla), and this elaborate religious ceremony, which takes place in the last week of the Bengali year and takes about a week's time to be completed, is never suspected by the people in these districts to be anything but a Hindu religious function primarily concerned with the Hindu deity lord Śiva." The fragmentary verses that are generally recited in connection of this function have striking affinity with the verses found in the liturgical works of the Dharma cult and also in the *gājana* of Dharma of West Bengal not only in matter and spirit, but sometimes in language also with slight deviations."<sup>29</sup>

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, W. Ward saw the *gājana* and *caḍaka* of Dharma in the villages of Pusuri and Raikali. Since Ward had no idea about the existence of a distinct Dharma cult and the rituals of Dharma did not appear very different to him from those of Śiva, he considered Dharma Ṭhākur to be another form of Śiva. According to him, "a black stone of any shape becomes the representative of this god. The worshippers paint the part designated as the forehead and place it under a tree; others place the stone in the house and give it silver eyes, and anoint it with oil and worship it. Almost every village has one of these idols. A festival in honour of this god is observed by the lower orders . . . The cere-

monies as like those of the swinging festival with the addition of bloody sacrifices, the greater number of which are goats. At this time devotees swing on hooks, perforate their sides with cords, pierce their tongues with spits, walk upon the fire and take it up in their hands, walk upon thorns and throw themselves upon spikes, keeping a severe fast. The people who assemble to see these feats of self torture, are entertained with singing, music and dancing, etc."<sup>21</sup>

All the items mentioned by Ward are still in vogue and they are shared by the *gājana* and *caḍaka* rituals dedicated nowadays mainly to Śiva. These two sets of rituals stand in reciprocal relation and the one cannot be distinguished from the other. We may rather say that the *caḍaka* and kindred ceremonies are offshoots of the traditional *gājana*, and some of the constituents of the latter like hook-swinging, etc. were absorbed and specialised by the grown offshoots. We can thus define the *gājana* as a very primitive ritual-complex surviving throughout the ages among the lower orders of society as well as among the tribal peoples which has always found expression with the growth of the proletarian cults in different parts of the country at different ages.

Of the tribal cults and rituals of eastern India, supposed to have some bearing on this primitive ritual-complex, reference may be made to the Manda, Saharul, Ba-parav, Bate-ili, Phagu, Phagua, Soherai, Akhan-Sendra, Karam, Jitiya, Deothan, Jadura, Khaddi-parav, Paus-parav, Magh-parav and Cait-parav of the Mundas, Sahare, Sakrat, Baha, Maghsin, Eroksim, Makmore, Batauli and Yamnana of the Santals, Saharul, Gramapuja, Grambanda, Goera, Soharai and Karam of the Oraons, Karam, Goera, Tusu, Sarul, Maghi, Maghsim, Akham, Baha, and Sakrat of the Mahalis, Saharul, Des-sikar, Dalma-puja, Karam, Bandhna, Buru, Maghpuja, Tusu, Makarsamkranti, Pancavahini, Bardela, Deosali, Gram-devata Kudra and Visai-candi of the Bhumijis, Pati-Asadi, Garbhu, Cadak, Rakam, Maghi, Jitha, Vasumati and Mahadeo of the Malpaharis, Paus-parav, Magh-parav, Khariapuja, Saharub, Baha, Gasapunya, Batauli, Gram-parav, Bandhana, Gohalpuja and Jemmama of the Hos, Sosabanga, Nav-jom, Karam, Jitia, Desai, Sohrai and Gram-thakur of the Birhors, Siva, Dak, Goera, Tusu and Maghi of the Koras, Baram, Bandhna, Jathel and Tusu of the Lodhas, and so on.<sup>22</sup> The exact relation of these tribal cults and rituals with the primitive ritual-complex we have described as *gājana* has not been established. About 40 years ago, K. P. Chattopadhyay<sup>23</sup> in one of his valuable articles had established the common basis of *Manda*, *Caḍaka* and Dharma cult. Others require to be worked out.

Of the deities associated with this primitive ritual-complex, we can divide them on the basis of their class character. Connected with Dharma

are Bāṇa and Baṇeśvarī, the god and goddess symbolizing the hoe, and the sisters of the latter Nandīśvarī, Śaṅkheśvarī, Dudheśvarī, Ghageśvarī, Khāgeśvarī and Kureśvarī—all local deities. Of the *Kāminyās* or consorts of Dharma, we have Śaṣṭhī, the goddess of childbirth, Śītalā, the goddess of small-pox, Manasā, the goddess of snakes, Dhavaladevī, the goddess of leprosy, Caṇḍi, Durgā, Kālī, etc. who were previously the consorts of Śiva. In the *Dharmapūjāvidhāna* the following deities are mentioned as *āvaraṇa-devatās* who are connected with the *gājana* and other rituals of Dharma. They are Ganeśa, Sūrya, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Durgā, Lakṣmī, Viṣahari, Bhairava, Bāsuli, Sarasvatī, Kuvera, Śaṣṭhī, Bhagavatī, Vasumatī Viśālākṣī, Vaṭukanātha, Kṣetrapālas, Brahmānī, Māheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavi, Vārāhi, Nārasimhi, Indrāṇi, Camuṇḍā. Brahmā, Gaṛuḍā, Viśvakarmā, Dvārapālas, Nandī, Kāmadeva, Baṇeśvara, Paṇḍāsura, Dikpālas, Śvetapaṇḍita, Nīlapaṇḍita, Kāmsāripaṇḍita, Ramāipaṇḍita. Nine Agnis, Magarapaṇḍita, Kālu-ghoṣa, Bhaṭṭadharādhara, Bhāskara-nṛpati, Sādhupura Datta, Tāmbuli, Uttaraṛādhā, Dakṣiṇarādhā, Asoyā-Caṇḍālā, Adinātha, Dinanātha, Caurāṅginātha, Gorakhanātha, Pañcagaṇḍa, Gauḍeśvara, etc. Besides the major gods of the Five Cults (*Pañcopāsana*), the list contains the Bhairavas, the Mātṛkās, the Dikpālas, the Kṣetrapālas, the Dvārapālas, the Nātha teachers, the Paṇḍitas of the Dharma cult and deified human beings. From other sources we come across a new set of deities like Kālārkarudra, Kālāgnirudra, Gambhīra, Carakī, Hājarā, Nīlacāṇḍikā, etc. These deities are especially worshipped in connection with the *caḍaka* rituals and liturgical texts were also composed in their honour.

That the *gājana* and *caḍaka* dedicated to Dharma, Śiva and other deities have a close bearing on the primitive conceptions of death and resurrection is amply indicated by a few of the surviving rituals of Dharma Thākura which may be classified into five distinct groups on the basis of their contents.

To the first group belong the simple vegetation and fertility rites which have given birth to the myths of the dying gods and mourning goddesses all over the world, the annual death and revival of the god symbolizing the annual death and revival of plant life. In many parts of Bengal the dead spirit of vegetation—Dharma, Śiva or anything—is kept under water for the whole year in a pond, and during the *gājana* the image is recovered in which the power of life is ceremonially infused, as if the dead is brought back to life again. The throwing of images into water and the mourning for them recall the European custom of throwing the dead spirit of vegetation under the name of Death, Yarlis, Kostroma and so on into the water and lamenting over it. Keeping the vegetation-deity submerged under water is a well-known and widely current form of rain magic, and we have many

instances in which certain stones are conceived as the rain-making god, and in the time of drought they are carried in procession and dipped in a stream.<sup>34</sup> A banana-leaf serves as the only garment of the priest performing the bathing rite of Dharma and this reminds us of the ceremonial nudity connected with rain and fertility charms.

The ritual use of wine as the source of fecundity and rebirth is a significant feature in the rituals of Dharma. It is the fluid power that gives a new life to everything. Even in the Vedic hymns wine is regarded as the drug of immortality. Its life-giving power has given to it the name *mṛtasañjivani* that which enlivens even the dead. The magical use of wine, so common in fertility and funeral rites, also finds expression in the *gājana* of Dharma. A gigantic vessel of wine called *bhāṇḍāl* is brought in front of the deity. Smaller vessels are also brought. Dances are held around the principal vessel and the participants become quite senseless which is caused sometimes by mere pretension, sometimes by the actual intoxicating effect of the liquor and sometimes by inhaling the smoke of powerful incense. In many places mock or actual fights are held among the participants for the possession of the vessel. In some villages of the Birbhum district the Dharma-stone is carried in procession to the house of a *Śunḍi* (belonging to the wine-making caste) who anoints it with oil and wine. At places again the actual task of brewing is performed before the god. Where Brahmanical influence is greater, milk is used instead of wine. Such wine rituals are also current in different parts of South India.<sup>35</sup>

Fire festivals connected with the ideas of death and resurrection form an integral part of the *gājana* ceremony. These festivals consist of dancing around the fire, procession with burning torches, fire gymnastics, walking on the fire, jumping upon burning woods and so on and can be connected with primitive fire cults, relics of which are found in the parallel European customs like May Fire, Bon Fire, Midsummer Fire, etc. Reference may be made in this connection to the Holi and Dewali festivals which are connected with primitive conceptions of death and resurrection and were based upon the observation of death and revival in plant life. In different parts of India, especially in many districts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa, fire festivals are held during the celebration of Holi and the ashes thus produced from the kindling of the fire are sprinkled on the ground for the multiplication of crops and fruits.

The death and resurrection theme also finds expression in the ritual of an actual dead body which is connected with the *gājana* and *caḍaka* of Dharma. In this ritual a game is played with the head of a dead person. The *Bāṇāvrata* of Śiva is also a ritual connected with corpse in which a human skull is anointed with vermilion and oil which becomes the occasion of a

collective dance in which the priests and devotees are the participants. The phallus of Śiva which is kept for a whole year under the water of a pond is then recovered and worshipped. The head priest gives a show of the supernatural power he has acquired through such rituals by perforating his tongue and by other feats of physical endurance.<sup>36</sup>

It is generally believed that the *gājana* is the festival of Śiva's marriage with Devī or of Dharma's marriage with Mukti and the participants called *Bhaktiyās* or *Bhaktiyās* who take the vows of asceticism are the members of the bridegroom's party. But why should the jubilant marriage party follow the custom of maintaining the traditional state of impurity by using mourning dress made of unwashed raw cotton, by hanging around the neck a key which is the specific mark of death in the family, by eating sun-dried rice self-cooked in a secluded spot which is done by the kinsmen of the dead, by abstaining from sexual intercourse, sleeping on the ground, allowing the hair, beard and nails to grow and so on which are exclusively funeral observations? The common Hindu rule is that when a death takes place, the kinsmen of the dead must consider themselves as impure until the *śrāddha* rite is performed. This is called *Aśauca-pālana* or maintaining the state of impurity. The whole thing therefore appears to be a miming of a very primitive ritual-mourning, centering round the myth of annual death and resurrection of a vegetation deity, an Indian parallel of Adonis, Attis or Osiris who symbolized the spirit of corn, dying every year and again rising from the dead.<sup>37</sup>

Dr. Amalendu Mitra has collected important data from the Birbhum district of West Bengal regarding the *caḍaka* of Dharma Thākura.<sup>38</sup> The main features of this *caḍaka*, as recorded by Dr. Mitra, are hook-swinging, perforation of the tongue, fire-festivals, wine-ritual, cult of Bāṇa Gosāin or Bāṇeśvara, collective dancing, and offering of small images of horse. The significance of some of these features, have been discussed above.

Of the remaining features, cult of Bāṇeśvara deserves special mention. This cult in some places is also connected with the *gājana* and *caḍaka* of Śiva. Although worshipped as a god, basically Bāṇeśvara represents a weapon, an arrow (*bāṇa*). The primitive custom of piercing the body with sharp weapons, of perforating the tongue, etc., commonly called *Bāṇfoḍā*, has been rationalised through the conception of this deity. During the worship of Dharma, the image of Bāṇeśvara becomes the occasion of a ceremony of circumambulation. We have also a female form of this deity. As we have remarked above, this god was probably a primitive agricultural deity connected with hoe-cultivation, and in course of time he had developed a relationship with other agricultural deities like Dharma or Śiva. An arrow or a spear-like instrument is considered to be the symbol of this god upon which

fruits and vegetables are thrown so that they get pierced. This rite may have some bearing on the aforesaid *bāṇfoḍā* which is so common a feature of the *caḍaka* and *gājana* of Dharma.

Small terracotta images of horse are offered to the Dharma shrines and wooden horses also play a significant part in the *gājana* and *caḍaka* of Dharma, but not in those of Śiva. Small clay figurines of horse are also offered to the Pīr shrines. In popular belief horse is the vehicle of Dharma, but this does not explain the custom, although in Vedic mythology horse is the vehicle of the Sun god, some of whose characteristics have been absorbed by Dharma Ṭhākur, as we have seen above. The horse is connected with many a primitive belief, especially with those that were associated with ideas of fertility, as we find in the rituals of the Aśvamedha or the horse sacrifice.<sup>39</sup> Sir James Frazer in his *Golden Bough* has given many examples of primitive agricultural beliefs and practices connected with horse and come to the conclusion that the horse represents the fructifying spirit both of the tree and of the corn, and hence the cause of the use of terracotta and wooden horses in the Dharma cult should be traced to such primitive fertility beliefs.

The same motive also explains the use of cane in the *gājana* of Dharma. The cane is not only kept in the shrine, but during the festival the participants pat the ground with canes in the name of Dharma. Imitations of beating the imaginary enemies with the sticks are also made. These enemies are surely malignant spirits who cause harm to the community in various ways. Referring to similar customs observed elsewhere Frazer remarks: "It comes to be thought desirable to have a general riddance of evil spirits at fixed times usually once a year in order that the people may make a fresh start in life freed from all the malignant influences which have been long accumulating about them."<sup>40</sup> In the cults of the South Indian village gods sticks and swords are used to drive away the evil spirits. The use of stick has some specific functions also, especially in the cases of natural and human productivity. Among different tribes of Southern India patting the ground by a stick is done in connection with childbirth and puberty rites.<sup>41</sup> The Oraon farmers before transplanting the rice-seedlings pat the ground with a stick evidently to infuse productive power into the earth.<sup>42</sup>

Prof. Chintaharan Chakravarti<sup>43</sup> refers to a god named Kālārkarudra as one of principal deities honoured in the rituals of *caḍaka*. This god is described in a few recent manuals<sup>44</sup> as being like 10 million rising suns in splendour, having the sun, the moon and fire as his eyes, having the digit of the moon in the locks of his matted hair brightened by the glow of lightning and carrying in two of his hands a bell and a sword, and with the other two forming the *mudrās* of dispelling fear and granting boons. Terrible to



look at and laughing as thunder, this god is the dispeller of the fear of those that bow down to him.

As his name implies, this god is the combination of three deities—*Kāla* or *Yama*, *Arka* or the Sun and *Rudra*—who came to be known as Śiva. One of the manuals which Prof. Chakravarti has used actually describes this god as the combination of *Kāla*, *Arka* and *Rudra*. Of these, *Kāla* the god of death is described as the destroyer of all animals, the giver of the desired boon to the devotee, the fearful, the knower of all religion, the Vaiṣṇava, the son of the sun having a terrible face, four hands, huge feet, a black complexion, red and deep-set eyes, a big body, a bright lotus-like face, having a great buffalo as his carrier, having in his hands an iron mace, a net, wine and a staff. *Arka* (the sun) is described as the sea of endless qualities, the lord of all the worlds, having the red lotus as his seat, a jewel on the head, a reddish hue of the body, carrying two lotuses in two of his hands, and forming with the other two the gestures of dispelling fear and granting boons. *Rudra* is described as the lord of the universe, seated on the bull, the giver of boons, the dispeller of fear, three-eyed, five-faced, with his body besmeared with ashes, with a small drum and trident in his hands, with the head marked by the moon, and having a serpent on his neck.

This *Kālārkarudra* is evidently a recent Brahmanical adaptation of Dharma under a new name supposed to connote the surviving principal deities forming the substrata of the earlier conception of Dharma Thākur as a composite popular deity. It has sufficiently been demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs how the cult of Death (*Yama* or *Kāla*), Sun (*Arka*) and Śiva (*Rudra*) contributed to the growth of Dharma cult, and there is no need of repeating the arguments once again.

#### NOTES & REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> *Annual Report of the Dacca Museum for 1939-40*, pp. 78 ff.
- <sup>2</sup> *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Letters, Vol. XV, pp. 101 ff.
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. VIII, 1942, pp. 99-135.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 104-05.
- <sup>5</sup> *B. C. Law Volume*, ed. D. R. Bhandarkar, et al, 1945, p. 672.
- <sup>6</sup> For general information about the Dharma literature of Bengal see S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta 1969, pp. 398-412.
- <sup>7</sup> *Rūparāmer Dharmamaṅgal*, intro.
- <sup>8</sup> D. C. Sircar, *Religious Life in Ancient and Medieval India*, Delhi 1971, pp. 189-196.
- <sup>9</sup> *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1894, p. 135; *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1894, pp. 55-61, 65-68.
- <sup>10</sup> P. C. Bagchi in *Dacca History of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 425.
- <sup>11</sup> K. P. Chattopadhyay, *loc. cit.*, pp. 112, 115, figs. 2-3.
- <sup>12</sup> Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
- <sup>13</sup> A. Getty, *Gods of Northern Buddhism*, p. 28.
- <sup>14</sup> D. C. Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
- <sup>15</sup> cf. *Sat. Br.*, XIII, 4.3.
- <sup>16</sup> Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 197; Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 268 ff.



## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

- <sup>7</sup> For the Dharmarāja cult of South India, see K. P. Chattopadhyay, *loc. cit.*, pp. 129-30.
- <sup>8</sup> *Rāparāmer Dharmamaṅgal*, intro.
- <sup>9</sup> *loc. cit.*
- <sup>10</sup> *B. C. Law Volume*, p. 672.
- <sup>11</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 199n.
- <sup>12</sup> S. B. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 385.
- <sup>13</sup> *B. C. Law Volume*, p. 78.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
- <sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 670.
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 673-74.
- <sup>17</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. II, p. 206.
- <sup>18</sup> *Bāṅgāl Itihās* (Beng.), Vol. I, p. 586.
- <sup>19</sup> See D. C. Sen, *Varṅga Sāhitya Paricaya*, Calcutta University Pub., Part I, pp. 159-161.
- <sup>20</sup> Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-280.
- <sup>21</sup> W. Ward, *A View of the History, Literature and Religion of the Hindoos*, Vol. II, p. 184.
- <sup>22</sup> A. Mitra, *Rāḍher Saṁskṛiti O Dharma Thākur* (Bengali), Calcutta 1972, pp. 255-56.
- <sup>23</sup> *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, Vol. XXX, 1934, pp. 151-61.
- <sup>24</sup> Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 75.
- <sup>25</sup> Whitehead, *Village Gods of South India* (YMCA), 49 ff.
- <sup>26</sup> H. K. Mukherjee, *Birbhum Bibaraṇi* (Bengali), Vol. II, pp. 5-9.
- <sup>27</sup> For the rituals see A. Mitra, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-115.
- <sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 146 ff.
- <sup>29</sup> See my article 'Priest and the Queen' in *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Vol. XXI, pp. 1-21.
- <sup>30</sup> Frazer, *op. cit.*, p. 722.
- <sup>31</sup> Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- <sup>32</sup> See my *Indian Mother Goddess*, Calcutta 1970, 25 ff.
- <sup>33</sup> *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters*, Vol. I, 1935, 429 ff.
- <sup>34</sup> Harimohan Chakravarti, *Kālārkarudrapūjāpaddhati*, Calcutta 1319 B.S.; Nrisimha Vidya-bhushan, *Caḍakapūjāpaddhati*, Calcutta 1336 B.S., and a MS of *Kālārkarudrapūjā* in the possession of Pandit Baman Chandra Gantama of Kotlipara in the Faridpur district which Prof. Chakravarti could use.

# Temple Promotion and Social Mobility in Bengal

HITESRANJAN SANYAL

## A. *The Temples :*

A striking feature of the countryside of Bengal is the abundance of temples. Scores of temples in various stages of preservation abound the rural settlements. There are areas in Bengal, such as the south-western part of it, where temples are particularly numerous and are found in heavy concentrations.<sup>1</sup>

Usually built of brick, the common permanent building material in this terraquous country, these temples are structures of modest or even small dimensions.<sup>2</sup> The forms of these temples are simple and easily definable. The most important of these forms have been designed directly after the curvilinear form of the thatched huts of Bengal called *chala* and hence are known as *chala* temples<sup>3</sup> (Figures 1, 2 and 3). There is also the common north Indian type of temple, e.g. the *sikhara*.<sup>4</sup> The features of this antiquated and traditional type of temple are found to have been later extremely simplified, retaining only the bare essentials, viz., the cubical cella and the curvilinear tower surmounting the walls of the cella (Figure 4). Miniature representations of this simplified *sikhara* form have been used as pinnacles called *ratna* in a type of temple the substructure of which was designed after the curved *chala* form (Figure 5). The type of temple designed by such a combination is known as *ratna*. Among the rest, the flat-roofed *dalan* type is the most numerous. This is a modified form of the flat-roofed permanent residential buildings. The major qualities of these temples are simplicity, freshness and spontaneity. These are also the qualities of the regional folk architecture of Bengal e.g. the *chala* from which the basic characteristic features of the two major types of temples, e.g. the *chala* and the *ratna* types have been derived.

It is due to this direct resemblance of the *chala* and the *ratna* temples with the regional folk architecture of Bengal that these temples have been marked as regional architecture of Bengal and these temples have been described as structures "appertaining to folk architecture".<sup>5</sup>

The simplified version of the *sikhara* type was developed in Bengal and its examples are almost entirely confined to the Bengali-speaking region. Similarly, the particular form of the flat-roofed structures, which is known as the *dālān* type does not appear to have spread beyond this region. These two types, therefore, may also be termed as regional Bengali types of temple.

Most of these temples were built by private individuals in their native villages, usually on a piece of land attached to their homestead or very close to it (Figure 5). Enshrining the family deity or the private deity of the founders, and being maintained by them, these temples are, no doubt, private temples. Yet, it seems that the founders preferred to locate their temples in an open and publicly accessible place. Thus, the temples are found to have been built in the outer fringe or in the outer courtyard of their houses or in a piece of land near-by or by the side of a public tank, and if possible close to the road so that the villagers and passers-by may easily have a full view of the temple which is considered to be the *kirti*, i.e., the achievement or the glory of the founder (Figures 4, 5 and 6; also explanation of these figures). In many cases the front door of the roadside temple opens right on the road or its front façade is fully visible to the passers-by (Figures 3, 5 and 6). If provision could be made by the founder, there may be a small piece of open court in front of the temple or around it (Figures 2 and 5) or an oblong hall with semi-permanent or permanent roof but open on the sides in front (Figures 3 and 6). These are meant for congregation of devotees on festive occasions. An affluent founder may have erected a wall, sometimes replaced by a series of smaller subsidiary temples, enclosing the court. However, it is only in very rare cases that the temple is considered to be strictly private, located within the inner courtyard of the founder's house and thus inapproachable to the people.

As private places of worship these temples form a part of the daily life of a small section of the villagers. Yet, the temples seem to have a much wider social relevance. Situated in the open and publicly accessible places these temples are regularly visited by the villagers, who, as a matter of practice, bow to the deity while passing by the adjacent road (Figure 5; also explanation of this figure), offer *puja* and participate in the festivals and functions organised in honour of the deity. Thus, the temples cater to the socio-religious needs of a large section of the rural population and at the same time function as a link between the founders of the temples (i.e., the comparatively prosperous and prominent section in the society) and the rest of the rural population.

### B. Chronology :

Nearly fifty per cent of the temples found in Bengal are definitely dated by inscriptions which are found to be affixed on the wall, usually on the front façade. The majority of the rest are also datable. It is possible to ascribe them to a comparatively broad spectrum of time-limit of ten to fifty years on the basis of certain evidences. These may be gathered from the papers of the founders' families and the documents related to the temples as well as by means of a comparative study of the formal and decorative features with those of the dated and datable structures.

These evidences indicate that the regional styles of temple-building in Bengal had started from the second half of the 15th century. The number of these temples gradually increased till the second half of the 18th century. There seems to have been a phenomenal proliferation of temple-building during the second half of the 18th century which continued till about the end of the 19th century. As a matter of fact, nearly eightyfour per cent of the existing temples were built during these one hundred and fifty years.

### C. Social Importance of Temple-Building :

Temple-building was a very important form of social service in traditional society. At the same time temples represented the wealth and social power of the founder and were also a medium of spreading and consolidating influence. If the temple was dedicated to a village deity or a deity who is held in esteem by the people of the area, the founder gained special prestige. Throughout the year the villagers offer *puja* in the temple on their auspicious occasions such as marriage, child-birth etc., or simply for the purpose of earning religious merit, or when they intend to propitiate the deity for temporal reasons. They congregate around the temple on occasions of the festivals organised in honour of the deity. In cases of festivals such as Sivaratri, Doljatra, Rathjatra, Ras, Kali and Durga *pujas* and the major annual festivals, villagers offer *pujas* to the deity and freely participate in the functions related to the festivals. Besides, people belonging to the functional castes of the villages had definite personal involvement in these festivals. They supplied articles necessary for the festivals or performed certain functions and in exchange received gifts and presents mostly in kinds or grants of land. For example, the Malakar, i.e., the gardener supplied flowers and garlands, the Gop, i.e., the milk-man supplied milk and curd, the Mayra, i.e., the confectioner supplied sweetmeats, the Muchis, who are the cobblers, beat the drums and bells, and the blacksmiths, i.e., the Karmakars, decapitated the animals for sacrifice. A prosperous founder may have provided for elaborate *nityapuja*, i.e., daily service in which case all the castes except the last one or the majority of them were required to be present

in the temple for supplying articles or performing their duties. In exchange they were usually given grants of land known as *chakran* or service grants.

It is due to the reason of popular participation that the private temples were rarely built within the compound of the founder's residence. Situated on an open or easily accessible place, the private temples attract the notice of the passers-by who almost invariably stop before the temple at least for a while and bow to the deity before proceeding for their destination. It is in these ways that private temple assumes public significance and the founder of the temple becomes a man of importance in the eyes of his fellow villagers.

Thus, socially the temples served as a medium of spreading influence and acquiring power as also of consolidating the position of eminence among the people. Temple-building, therefore, must have been very important to all classes of founders. However, it assumed particular significance in the case of the founders belonging to the successive lower castes of the *Nabasakhs*, intermediaries, *Ajalchals* and *Antyajs*.<sup>8</sup> Handicapped by their low social position these people were constrained to remain far behind the upper castes, i.e., the Brahmans, Baidyas and Kayasthas in the social scale. Temple-building helped them to project a new image of superiority of their own as well as of their castes before the society; an essential step in their attempts to outgrow their low social position whenever these castes had grown in importance as entrepreneurs, traders or landholders.

#### D. *Technical Features of the Temples:*

The basic traits of the plan of the regional Bengali temples appear to have been derived directly from the plans of the huts whose outer forms were adopted in designing the outer forms of the *chala* and the *ratna* temples. In other words, the plans of the buildings meant for residential purposes were adopted to design the layout<sup>9</sup> of buildings to be used for worship of deities by individuals or small groups and other allied functions [Figures 7, 8, 9 (a), 10 and 11 (a)]. However, like the outer forms the formal architectural plans were modified in a number of different ways. These modifications have given rise to a wide range of variations as a result of which the plans remain divided into several small groups and subgroups [see, for example, Figures 9(a) and 11(a) for variations of one single form as represented in Figure 7].

While the basic features of plan and outer form were derived from the indigenous popular sources, the constructional aspects of the buildings were taken from the architecture introduced in Bengal by the Muslims. The Muslims had brought with them from West Asia a very great tradition of architectural accomplishment and the advanced technology of arcuate

construction. The arcuated methods of construction and architectural elements such as the true arch, dome and vault were adopted by the Hindu builders for construction of temple structures. These were made to conform to the different variations in plan the basic traits of which were taken from the indigenous huts made of mud walls and thatched roof on bamboo frames [Figures 9(a), (b), (c), 10 and 11(a), (b), (c)]. Such an attempt was actually an exercise for effecting a compromise between the two sets of divergent elements derived from entirely different socio-cultural and architectural traditions. This was done in a number of different ways resulting in a wide range of variations in designing the internal roof of the structures [Figures 9(a), (b), (c), 10 and 11(a), (b), (c)]. Even major variations were made in designing the internal roof of identically shaped spaces [compare Figures 9(a) and 11(a)].

With these basic features of plan, construction and outer forms the regional Bengali temples are actually a conglomeration of elements derived from two widely divergent sources, one indigenous and the other West Asian. The indigenous sources may be divided into two categories. The first category was the folk architecture of Bengal and the second category is the simplified version of the antiquated *sikhara* which was also used in designing the superstructure of the *ratna* temples. The practice of assembling different features of plan, construction and outer form derived from these divergent sources had started at the initial stage of temple-building in the second half of the 15th and the 16th century. It is curious that the continuous practice in temple-building in permanent materials with the help of the advanced technology of arcuation till the end of the 19th century and even later did not lead to the development of integrated schemes of construction based on ethical architectural practices. Throughout the entire period the problems arising out of an artificial combination between the indigenous and exogenous elements persisted. The construction did not follow from the plan. The different elements of construction were adjusted to the different variations of the plan in a slipshod manner [Figures 9(a), (b), (c), 10 and 11(a), (b), (c)]. On the other hand, the outer forms do not follow from the construction. The indigenous *chala* outer forms were obtained by modelling the surface above the inner roof. In other words, the internal dome or the vault, and the outer form have no organic relation with each other; the outer form is actually a very thick and heavy surmounting element which is artificially designed on the lumps of bricks and debris fixed with mortar on the internal roof [Figure 9(a), (b)]. The *sikhara* form was obtained in a similar manner on a domed or corbelled interior [Figure 11(c), mark the pinnacles which represent the *sikhara* in miniature]. The problem seems to have been much more acute in the case of the *ratna* temples. The *chala* substructure and the super-

structure composed of self-contained *sikhara-ratnas* are combined together artificially by placing the latter on the roof of the curvilinear *chala* sub-structure (Figure 5). In the cases of the multi-pinnacled structures one or more self-contained storeys which may repeat the features of the sub-structure are added to accommodate the increased number of *ratnas* [Figures 6 and 11(c)].

From the technical point of view the history of the regional temple-building in Bengal extending for over four hundred years is an account of stagnation followed, in certain respects, by degenerated practices. The problems, which at the beginning arose from the attempts to combine elements derived from divergent traditions into new architectural designs persisted throughout the entire period; the temples built at the beginning and at the end suffered from similar deficiencies. They never received proper attention. All that was done was to find out ways and means to bypass the problems. Walls were made inordinately thick and the elements of internal roof construction were multiplied and made heavier in order to make them fit to carry the enormous dead load impinged upon them by the heavy and solidly built superstructure [Figures 9(a), (b), (c), 10 and 11(a), (b), (c)]. Architecturally this does not make sense: intellectually it is a naive approach. Even the great proliferation of temple-building from the middle of the 18th century did not give any impetus for the improvement of the temples in respect of architectural technology or external design. In fact, comprehension of the technical features deteriorated with the proliferation of temple-building and the consequent boom in the architects' profession.

The architects of the temples appear to have failed to realise the potentiality of the techniques and methods as well as the aesthetic potential of *chala* form. Curvilinear Bengali *chala* form was also adopted in the Mughal and Rajput architecture in designing a particular type of *chhatra* which is known as *Bangali chhatra*, after the region of its origin e.g., Bengal. The methods and techniques of construction were same as those of the *chala* temples of Bengal. Hence the problems were also same in both cases. However, the north Indian architects succeeded in outgrowing the problems of incongruity arising out of the combination of divergent elements. They converted the external *chala* form into a thin shell the construction of which followed the lines determined by the internal vault. But the Bengali architects failed to grapple with the problem. Apparently, the outer forms and the available methods seemed incommunicable to each other. The Bengali architects stopped at the point. Their patrons, including the emerging lower caste merchants, entrepreneurs and artisans did not feel any urge for better and integrated constructions. They were content with the available forms and constructions.

**E. Proliferation of Temple-Building:**

About eightyfour per cent of the existing temples which may be ascribed to the period between the second half of the 15th and the end of the 19th century were built during the last one hundred and fifty years, i.e., during the second half of the 18th century and the 19th century. There seems to have been a phenomenal proliferation of temple-building during these hundred and fifty years (Table 1). This proliferation indicates certain important changes in the sphere of social leadership. A large section of the founders who had brought about and continued the proliferation came from the lower rungs of the society. Occupationally they were small or modest landholders, merchants, manufacturers, substantial farmers, and professionals. In terms of the local caste hierarchy of Bengal they belong to the successive lower ranks of the *Nabasakh*, *Ajalchal*, intermediary and *Antyaj* caste groups. These people were, no doubt, in the field of temple-building from the very beginning, but their contributions towards temple-building had never reached significant proportions till the second half of the 18th century. The largest contribution toward temple-building was made by the upper caste landholders during this time (Table 1). The sharp increase in the participation of the people from the lower rungs of the society drastically changed the situation by divesting the upper caste landholders of their position of pre-eminence in the field of temple-building. On the other hand, the consistently high rate of temple-building by the comparatively ordinary and socially handicapped people indicate that temple-building had become a part of a broad-based social movement through which people from the lower strata of the society had been trying to move up to eminence and acquire social power.

These changes do not seem to have any impact on the technical aspects of temple-building. The number of the temples, no doubt, increased immensely because of the participation of much greater number of founders. However, the increase resulted only in the multiplication of variations in plan, construction and outer forms which, in many cases, indicate degeneration of skill. This juxtaposition of qualitative stagnation, and immense quantitative growth and proliferation of variations is indeed a curious phenomenon. Architecturally it is difficult to explain. Because all the factors necessary for architectural evolution were present. The forms had potential for developing into higher architectural expressions, the techniques followed were highly developed according to contemporary standards, the materials used were well-kilned brick and lime mortar, and above all there was a consistent high demand for temple-building for at least one hundred and fifty years. Yet the quality of the structures did not improve. However, the relationship of the proliferation of temple-building with the social change



marked by the emergence of new groups of patrons from the lower rungs of the society makes it a significant social phenomenon. The reasons for this curious development in the field of temple-building, therefore, may be traced in the developments in the society in terms of the changes that had been occurring since the second half of the 18th century.

The new aspirants for higher social position and leadership who had been coming to importance from the second half of the 18th century included people from both the higher and the lower caste groups. The people from the upper castes were mostly landholders. They enjoyed the privileged position formed by the high social standing of their castes and the honourable occupation of landholding. There were also landholders among the lower caste groups e.g. the *Nabasakh*, intermediary, *Ajalchal* and *Antyaj* castes. However, originally most of them were traders, manufacturers or peasants. These occupations, traditionally associated with the *Nabasakh* etc. castes, were not considered to be respectable in the traditional society. Naturally, the rise of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes to social importance and leadership involved a much stiffer ascent and a more elaborate process which included the strenuous effort to project a refined image of the castes before the society. This is exactly why temple-building, which is an important means of acquiring social eminence in the traditional society, had, in the case of the aspirants from the *Nabasakh* etc. castes, a much wider social significance than their upper caste counterparts.

Yet, both the upper and the *Nabasakh* etc. castes patronised the same sort of architecture. The higher social standing of the upper castes when confronted with the new challenge to their monopoly of social leadership from the lower rungs did not lead to the development of a different ideal of architecture which could distinguish substantially their efforts from those of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes. On the other hand the *Nabasakh* etc. castes are found to have been content with the same sort of architecture "appertaining to folk architecture" which had flourished mainly under the patronage of the upper castes, even in their attempts to build up a new image of eminence. It may be argued that the *Nabasakh* etc. castes were inclined to follow the landholding and socially and culturally superior upper castes in their efforts to establish superiority. This would fit into what M. N. Srinivas had described as the general trend in the process of Sanskritisation according to which the aspirant castes from the lower rungs of the society try to be closer to the high Brahmanical ideal by imitating the manners and customs of the upper castes.<sup>7</sup> But there are evidences to show that the *Nabasakh* etc. castes were capable of deviating and actually did deviate considerably from the practices upheld by the upper castes. This will be evident from the patterns of preference of the two major caste groups with regard

# TEMPLE PROMOTION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY



FIG. 1 Huts, Midnapore district



FIG. 2 Siva temples (1768-1773),  
Ganpur (Birbhum)



FIG. 3 Krishna Ray temple (1685),  
Khanlla (Howrah)



FIG. 4 Gopesvara Siva temple (1732),  
Baikunthapur (Burdwan)



FIG. 5 Lakshmi-Narayana temple (1718), Metyala (Bankura)

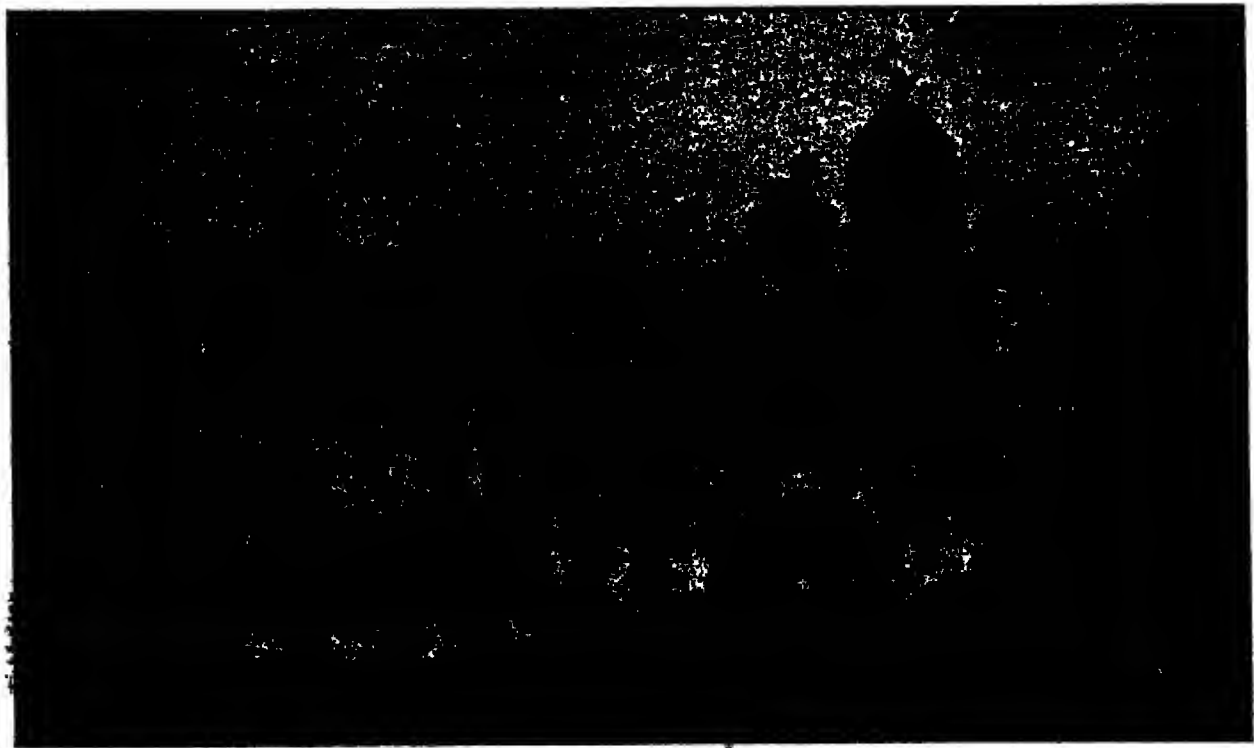


FIG. 6 A group of temples (late 18th cent.), Rawali (Twentyfour Parganas)

# TEMPLE PROMOTION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

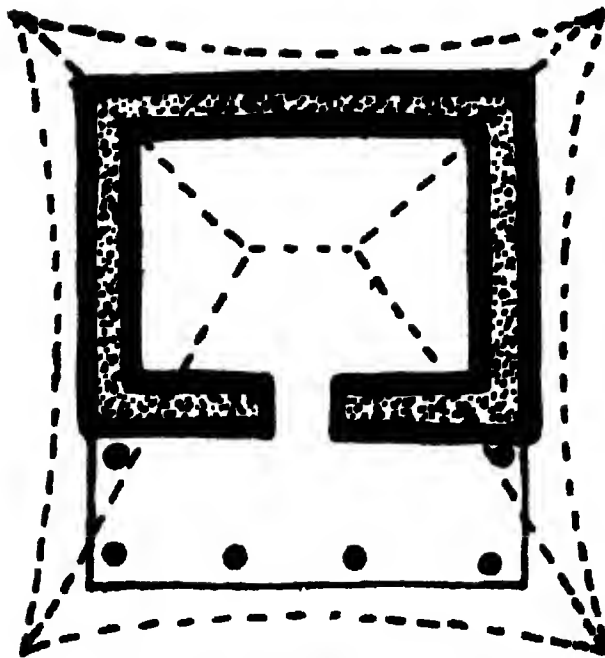


FIG. 7 Plan, Single porched hut

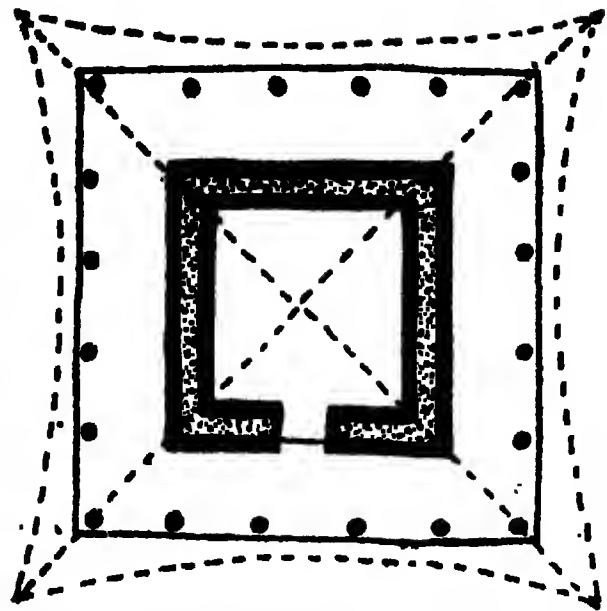


FIG. 8 Plan, Four porched huts

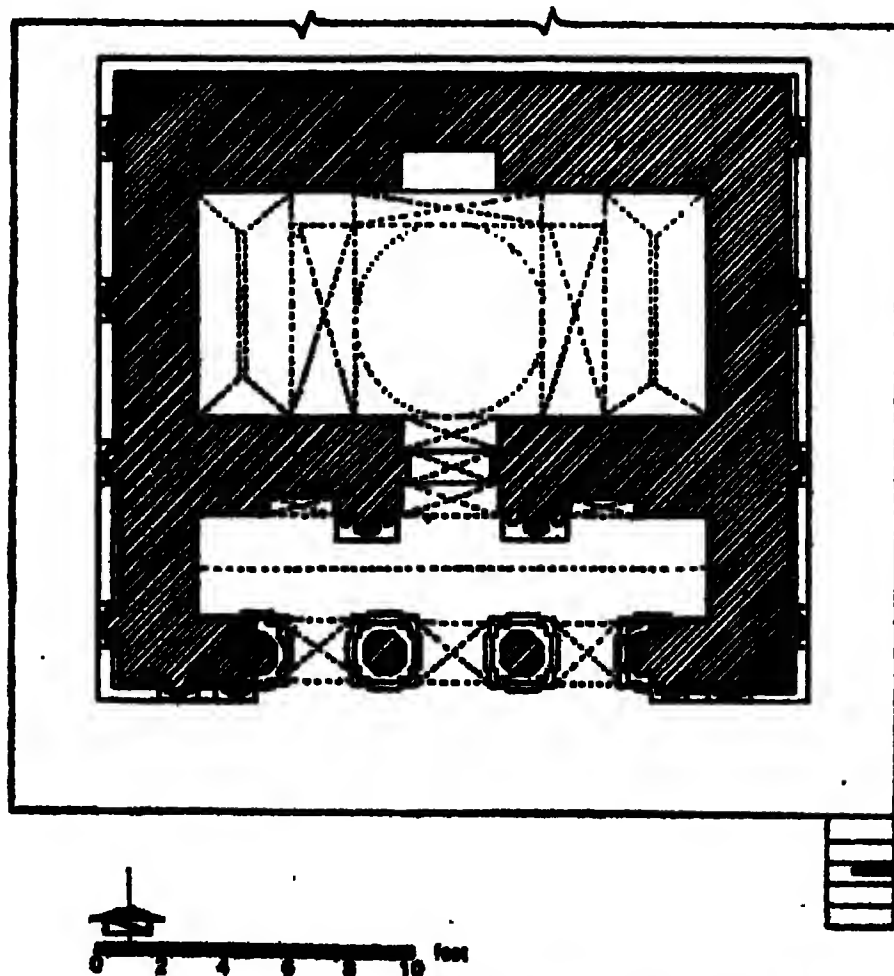


FIG. 9 (a) Plan, Siva temple (1753), Syamganj, Kalna (Burdwan)

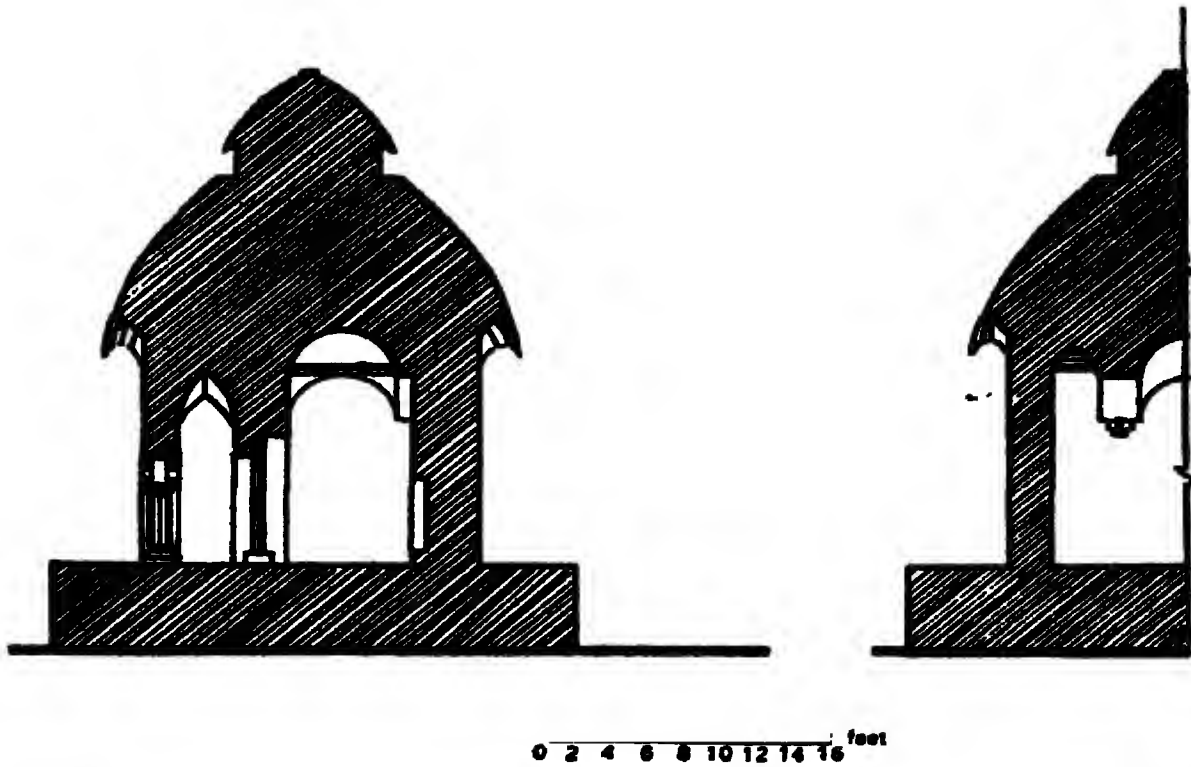


FIG. 9 (b) Transverse section, above temple

FIG. 9 (c) Longitudinal section, above temple

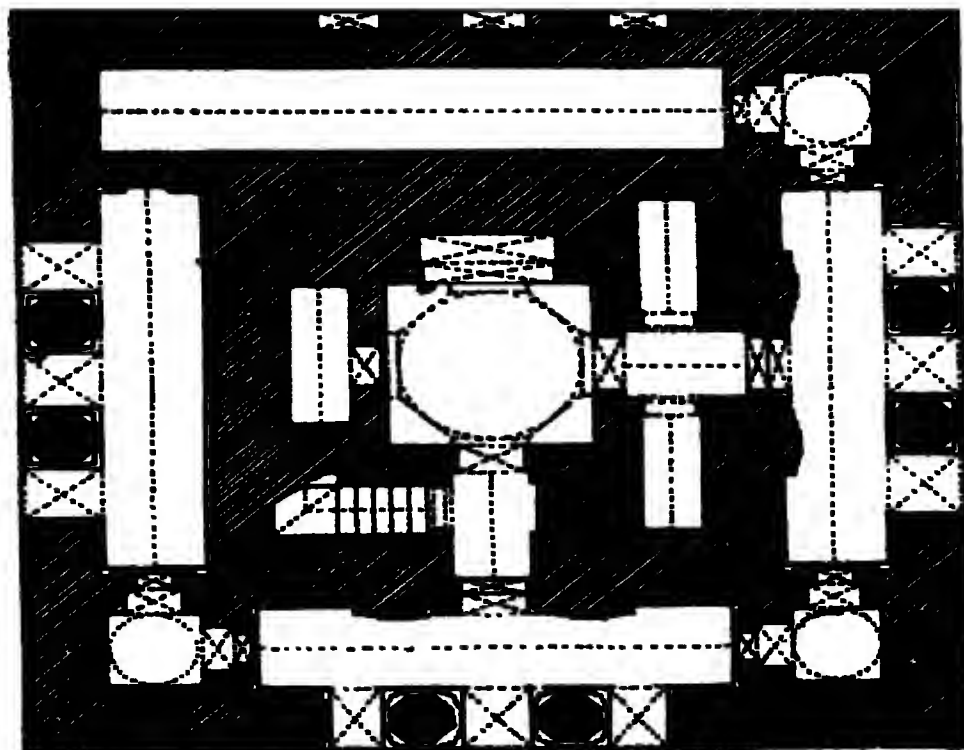


FIG. 10 Plan, Madanamohana temple (1696). Bishnupur (Bankura)

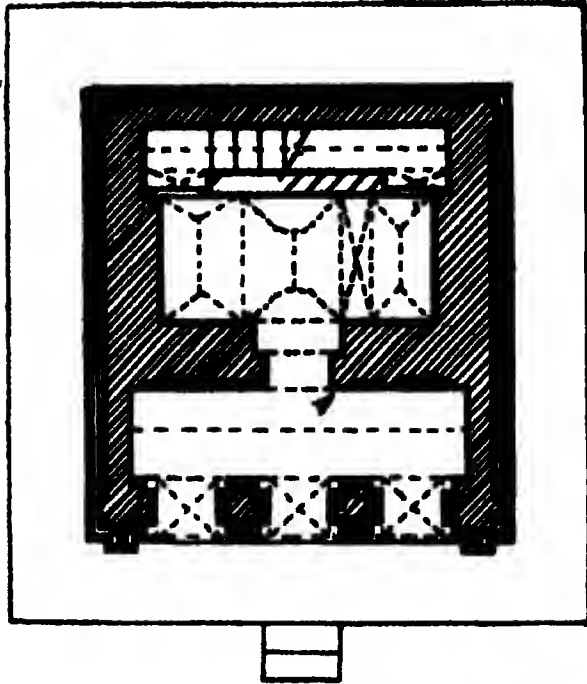


FIG. 11 (a) Plan, Siddharanatha temple (mid. 19th century), Kharar (Midnapore)

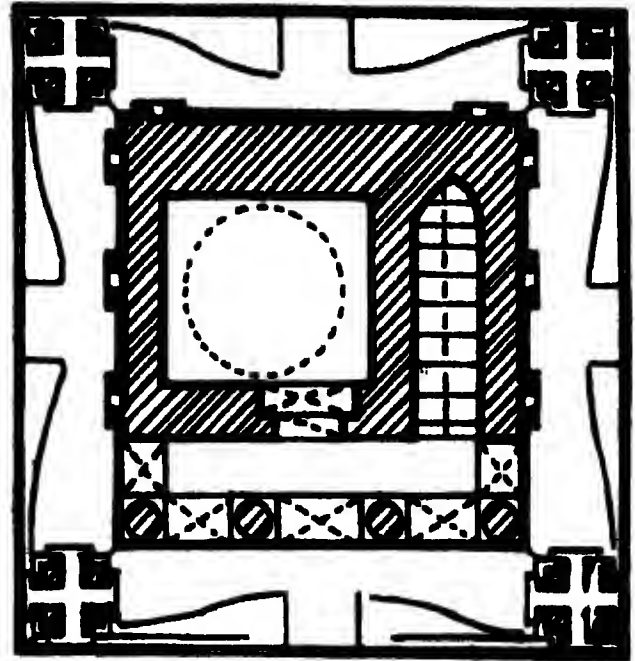


FIG. 11 (b) Plan, first floor above temple

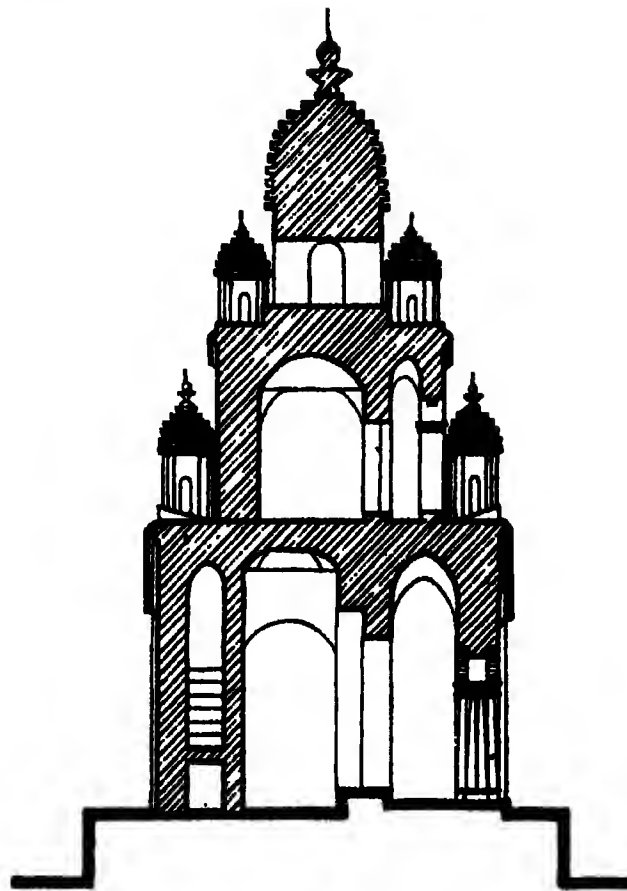


FIG. 11 (c) Transverse section, above temple

to the choice of the types of superstructure and themes of figurative ornamentation of the temples during the period of the great proliferation of temple-building. While the upper caste founders consistently preferred the *chala* type more than any other type of superstructure, the *Nabasakh* etc. castes are found to be increasingly discarding the *chala* type and switching over to the symbiotic *ratna*, antiquated *sikhara* and the ordinary *dalan* types in their choice of superstructure (Tables 2 and 3). With respect to the choice of themes of ornamentation too, the two major caste groups are found to represent opposite trends. The upper castes showed increasing preference for the secular motifs. Conversely, the *Nabasakh* etc. castes showed much greater interest for the religious themes.

The points of similarity and divergences between the temple-building of the established upper castes and that of the emerging groups of aspirants from the lower rungs of the society assume significance because of their direct relationship with the process of social change which had brought about the proliferation of temple-building in Bengal. Apparently, the differences served to distinguish the efforts of one group from that of the other. Such distinctions were important for the *Nabasakh* etc. castes. These must have helped them to build up a new identity of their own which was marked not only by significant deviations from the practices of the upper castes but also by a strong inclination to outgrow the direct expression of the folk idioms. However, so far as temple-building is concerned, their urge for social distinction seems to have been satisfied with limited achievements only. The new aspirants failed to usher in a process of architectural evolution by utilising the potentials of the forms and methods and techniques of construction. In the ultimate analysis this limitation seems to be the opposite side of the same model. The reasons for this dichotomy in the temple-building of the aspiring lower castes may be traced in the circumstances in which their movements originated and in the nature and character of these movements.

#### F. Social Mobility in the Traditional Society:

The *Nabasakh*, intermediary, *Ajalchal* and *Antyaj* castes form the successively lower caste groups remaining below the Brahmans, Baidyas and Kayasthas who collectively constitute what is known as the upper caste group. Occupationally, they are peasants, artisans and traders. These occupations were neither considered honourable, nor in the context of a localised market economy were these occupations particularly those of the peasants and the artisans, profitable. Their low social position was largely dependent on occupations traditionally assigned to them as well as pursued by them in the absence of alternative job opportunities. It was, therefore, difficult for

them to emerge as a viable social force effectively changing the social condition in their favour. In the ultimate analysis, change of occupation was the starting point of social change. The other sources of social change e.g. accretion of wealth, control over land (the primary means of production) and political power could be acquired after they had changed their traditional occupations to more lucrative ones.

However, change of occupation seems to have been extremely difficult. The difficulties will be evident in the following observations of N. K. Bose with regard to the reasons for continuity of caste in India, through centuries:

“(1) In an economy of relative scarcity, particularly when there were swift changes of rulers, the rules of caste were devised in a manner so that various communal groups were woven together into a network of mutual interdependence.

“(2) Competition was positively discouraged. An artisan or priest could seek protection of the king or of the local college of Brahmins or even the caste or village panchayat if he were threatened by competition by any one who infringed upon his preserve.”<sup>8</sup>

Under these circumstances it was difficult for an individual or a group to change a hereditary occupation with which each caste was invariably associated, and in most cases, was their monopoly. Prevailing occupations were few. An attempt to change occupation by anyone would be tantamount to infringement upon the monopoly of others and would, therefore, be likely to be resisted. Besides, in view of the system of interdependence, change of occupation would involve a series of fresh adjustments with various caste groups which was a difficult task to perform.

Despite these difficulties and discouraging factors some data show that occupational mobility was not altogether unknown. On the evidence furnished by the work of the late 16th century Bengali poet Mukundaram Chakravarty it appears that groups of people from the pastoral caste of the Gops and the oil producing and trading Telis could switch over to agriculture.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the mid-18th century Bengali poet Bharatchandra Ray Gunakar's reference to the Chashi (cultivating) Kaibarttas and Chasha (cultivator) Dhobas indicates that some of the fishing Kaibarttas and washermen Dhobas could have abandoned their respective traditional occupations and resorted to agriculture as new sub-castes or castes.<sup>10</sup>

These examples of occupational mobility indicate that agriculture was the refuge for the spill-overs from other functional castes. It is perhaps mainly due to the availability of potentially arable land and, even, perhaps a favourable man-land ratio, now lost in overpopulated Bengal, that agriculture could accommodate newcomers. To this might be added the general



sense of security enjoyed by the peasants during the Mughal period. So long as the peasant could pay the rent and the various taxes and imposts and fulfil the various other customary local conditions by which he was bound it was not generally possible for the landholder to dispossess him.<sup>11</sup>

Generally speaking agriculture was not a profitable occupation during the Mughal period. Yet, the agriculturist Gops who later came to be known as Sadgops and the Chasi Kaibarttas appear to have made their change of occupation to agriculture the starting point of rise to eminence before the middle of the 18th century. They extended their activities to establish control over land and agriculture in the respective areas of their concentration<sup>12</sup> where their leaders had succeeded in acquiring political power at the local level.<sup>13</sup> It is this combination of economic strength and political power in the areas of their concentration which placed the agriculturist Gops and the Chasi Kaibarttas in a position of advantage *vis-a-vis* the other castes including the upper castes and ultimately helped them to raise their social position in terms of the local hierarchy of caste.<sup>14</sup>

However, such cases of combination are rare. Moreover, agriculture itself did not mean prosperity. Rent was quite high. To this were added various other cesses and exactions, imposed by landholders.<sup>15</sup> After meeting the demands of the landholder, the peasants were hardly left with anything more than could be required to meet their bare necessities. In fact, their condition "generally approximated to the lowest possible levels of subsistence"<sup>16</sup> and they were compelled to be in almost perpetual debt with the village money-lender and to depend on the landholder while in distress.<sup>17</sup>

The political and economic developments of the 18th and 19th century helped both in expanding the scale and accentuating the pace of the mobility movements of the lower castes. Opportunities came primarily through the expanding trade of European commerce and consequent increase in the demand for the industrial products of Bengal. This enlarged the scope for alternative job opportunities of the different functional castes including the agriculturist castes. Till the 18th century agriculture was the only occupation for dissidents from the other functional castes. Increased demand for cotton textile, silk, sugar and the expanding inland trade in articles such as jute, rice, salt and iron, brass and bell-metal ware, created employment: they also offered opportunities for prosperity for the people who were traditionally related to production and trade in these articles. Also they accommodated people from other castes, even the traditional agriculturists. Thus we find the agriculturist Chashi Kaibarttas, the oil-pressing and oil-selling Telis and the barber caste of the Napits involved in the production of silk and trade in this article;<sup>18</sup> the menial caste of the Chandals in brass and bell-metal industry and trade;<sup>19</sup> the oil-pressing and oil-selling Telis and

Kalus in iron smelting;<sup>20</sup> and the Chashi Kaibarttas in iron trade and small-scale engineering enterprises;<sup>21</sup> and the Telis, the betel nut-selling Tambulis and the liquor-manufacturing and selling Sunris in inland trade in salts, rice and jute.<sup>22</sup>

*G. Corporate Social Mobility Movements and Temple-Building:*

The new economic opportunities and changes in occupation helped a large section of the *Nabasakh*, *Ajalchal*, intermediary and *Antyaj* castes to acquire prosperity. Many of these new rich were ultimately interested in land rights. They wanted to acquire the title of *zamindar* which gave them control over land and the power and prestige which followed it.<sup>23</sup> The opportunities to realise this ambition were created by the successive revenue reforms of the East India Company's Government in Bengal which culminated in the Permanent Settlement of 1793. These reforms gradually broke the old and large landholding families and replaced them by numerous small landholders as well as created a large body of subinfeudators whose rights and privileges were nearly the same as those of the *zamindar* by which title the subinfeudators were also popularly known.<sup>24</sup>

Another important aspect of the 18th and 19th century rise of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes will be evident from their literary contributions. From about the middle of the 18th century reputed poets belonging to the lower castes are found to emerge. Some of these poets have acquired notable positions in the history of Bengali literature.

The lower castes' rise in the field of literature was marked by the introduction and popularisation of new literary forms such as the *Kabi*, *Akhras*, and *Jhumur* songs and the operatic composition of *Jatra*. The literary achievements of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes were mostly confined to these new literary forms. The most important of these literary forms is the *Kabi* poetry which was meant for singing. There were, no doubt, upper caste *Kabiwalas* (i.e., composers of *Kabi* poetry and *Kabi* songsters). But the majority of the reputed *Kabiwalas* came from the *Nabasakh*, *Ajalchal* and intermediary castes and even from the *Antyaj* castes.<sup>25</sup> In terms of patronage the *Kabi* poetry and songs were much more broad-based than the *Mangal-kabyas*, the popular narratives in verse describing the exploits of the different gods and goddesses. The patrons of the *Kabiwalas* were both rural landed gentry as well as the rising commercial community of the urban centres such as Calcutta, Srirampur, Chandannagar and Chinsura.<sup>26</sup> In fact, all the new forms of literary accomplishments which had emerged and developed during the 18th and 19th centuries had a very wide demand in the riverine nodes of European commercial interest.

No new form of architectural design developed in the 18th century.

But the different trends in temple-building during the 18th and 19th century indicate that the *Nabasakh* etc. castes had become a conscious and self-confident group of aspirants who had been trying to assert themselves socially. This will be evident from their high rate of contribution towards temple-building, greater inclination for decorated façades than the upper castes, choice of the types of superstructure and themes of ornamentation and in the increasing tendency for getting their names recorded in the inscriptions of the temples. The last phenomenon is also evident among the architects, belonging to the *Ajalchal*, intermediary and *Antyaj* castes who demonstrated an increasing tendency to have their names and the identity of their places of residence recorded in the inscriptions of the temples many of which did not contain the names of the founders even.

The sharp increase in the contributions of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes towards temple-building during the second half of the 18th century meant an end of the predominating position of the upper castes in the field of temple-building. This very important means of mass communication, and social control over the people gave them access to social power which was hitherto dominated, even virtually monopolised, by the upper castes, who had the natural advantage of high ritual rank and a long standing tradition of control over land.

The sharp increase in the *Nabasakh* etc. castes' rate of temple-building during the second half of the 18th century and the high rate of their participation in temple-building during the 19th century show that there had been sustained collective efforts by the entire series of the successively lower castes of the *Nabasakh*, *Ajalchal*, intermediary and *Antyaj* castes; the purpose being elevation of their social position in terms of the local hierarchy of castes.

This point of a corporate mobility drive is further strengthened by the trends in their patterns of preference with regard to types of superstructure and themes of ornamentation. As a part of their mobility movement they were required to reform their manners and customs for projecting before society a relatively sophisticated image of their own. The wide range of varieties in superstructure types and themes of ornamentation offered the *Nabasakh* etc. castes the opportunity to select superstructure types and themes which would suit their needs of refinement and sophistication. Particularly from the second half of the 18th century the *Nabasakh* etc. castes are found to show increasingly greater interest for the *ratna*, *sikhara*, and the *dalan* types and gradually discard the *chala* form which had been the most popular type since the first half of the 17th century (Tables 2 and 3). With respect to the themes of ornamentation the *Nabasakh* etc. castes demonstrated increasing preference for the classical, mythological and contemporary religious

themes. They discarded the secular scenes which may be found in the majority of the panels of the temples built by them till the end of the first half of the 18th century. These were their steps towards sophistication. While the *chala* type directly resembles the form of the domestic *chala* architecture, the *ratna* is a composite design, the *sikhara* represents the antiquated tradition and the *dalan* type is an imitation of the permanent residential building of the richer section of the population. Evidently, the change to the last three forms was meant to avoid the direct impact of the folk architectural form. The change with respect to the themes of ornamentation was made in order to demonstrate their inclination for the religious themes which, in effect, meant refinement.

These changes were made simultaneously from the second half of the 18th century by the different castes of the *Nabasakh*, *Ajalchal*, intermediary and *Antyaj* groups all over Bengal. This was done in a manner which appears to be a corporate decision by these castes to take concrete steps towards social mobility. The necessity for projecting a refined image arose at the same time. It was in response to this necessity that the *Nabasakh* etc. castes had changed their pattern of preference with respect to the types of superstructure and themes of ornamentation.

These changes in the patterns of preference of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes had other dimensions too. The trends in their patterns of preference, both with respect to the types of superstructure, and the themes of ornamentation, appears to have been rather inversely related to those of the upper castes (Tables 2 and 3). These changes took place in course of their attempts to acquire sophistication and refinement in terms of a broad cultural process which has been described by M. N. Srinivas as Sanskritization.<sup>27</sup> Such attempts of Sanskritization by the lower castes are generally found to have been imitations of the manners and customs of the dominant castes. Though not numerically, but both economically and culturally, the upper castes, e.g. the Brahmans, Baidyas and Kayasthas constituted the dominant section in the Bengali Hindu population. Their contributions towards temple-building had also phenomenally increased in the second half of the 18th century. Despite the sharp increase in the participation of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes in temple-building in the second half of the 18th century, and the high rate of their contribution towards temple-building during the 19th century, the upper castes founded the majority of the temples in all periods (Table 1). They also demonstrated indications of change in their patterns of preference with regard to the types of superstructure and themes of ornamentation (Table 2). Yet, the *Nabasakh* etc. castes did not follow the upper castes in their attempts to acquire sophistication and refinement. In this respect they formed their own judgment.

The lower castes did not emulate the upper castes, possibly because of the latter's strong inclination for the *chala* form and the increasing tendency to choose the secular themes which might have been considered by them to be detrimental to their interest. This phenomenon is also somewhat similar to the broad social structure described by Srinivas with regard to Sanskritization. He speaks of a process which he entitles Westernization as a result of which the upper castes showed preference for the popular culture generated by the foreign ruling class, to which lower caste Sanskritization had an inverse relationship. While the upper castes Westernized, the lower castes Sanskritized, a phenomenon which was the product of alien rule treating the caste system with non-interference.<sup>28</sup> However, the temples of the upper castes dating to the second half of the 18th century seems to testify that the bulk of the upper caste people in rural Bengal did not have any Western standards to emulate. Their marked preference for the indigenous *chala* type indicate that even after the British occupation of Bengal they relied on the popular indigenous symbols for social communication and identity with the people around them when their lower caste counterparts tended to project Sanskritized and sophisticated image of themselves through a different pattern of preference.

Yet, there are indications that there had been certain changes in the patterns of preference of the upper castes. The pace of change was no doubt, much slower among them than that of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes. Even this limited change is marked, so far as the choice of the superstructure was concerned, by growing preference for the *sikhara* type (Table 2). However, this trend of preference for the antiquated tradition among the upper castes may be contrasted with their increasing preference for secular themes in the ornamentation of the temples. On the whole, the attitude of the upper castes appear to be much more complex than that of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes; there seems to have been cross currents of different varieties of trends in their social culture which calls for a separate study on its own merit.

#### H. Some Conclusion:

The common phenomenon of growing interest in the antiquated traditional *sikhara* form apart, the widening gap between the upper and the lower castes with regard to the pattern of preference underlines the difference in the approach between the two caste groups and the different dimensions of the social mobility movements of the *Nabasakh*, *Ajalchal*, intermediary, and *Antyaj* castes. However, their distinctions seem to have been confined to a superficial level. The rise of the trading and manufacturing *Nabasakh* etc. castes did not bring about any basic change either in the technical aspects

of temple-building which was used by them as a medium of projecting sophistication and superiority or in the society. In temple-building stagnation continued in spite of the facts that the materials used were well-kilned brick and strong lime mortar, the advanced technology of arcuation was widely prevalent and the basic *chala* form had the potentiality of growing into sophisticated architectural forms as will be evident from the development of the *chala* form into the *Bangali chhatri* of Northern India.

Socially, the aspiration of the *Nabasakh* etc. castes were confined to the next higher stage in the local hierarchy of castes. This sometimes meant higher ritual rank in terms of acceptability as a cleaner caste from whom a clean Brahman will accept drinking water and who will be ministered to by a clean Brahman. In the context of the traditional society this was a great achievement. But these changes had always taken place in conformity with the established social system and values.

Thus, the limitations of the movements of the growing community of aspirants from the *Nabasakh* etc. castes are clear. It is also clear that the material base of these movements were largely derived from the occupational and economic mobility made possible by the opportunities released by European commerce and administration. Still, it is important that even limited opportunities could alienate local religious and social traditions and give rise to social mobility movements of large groups of lower castes, which sought to revise the ritual status of the successively lower castes in terms of upward movement in the local hierarchy of caste. It seems that even within the well-defined limits of the caste-based structure, the traditional society was capable of developing and actually did develop internal mechanisms, such as temple-building, which helped the rising groups of aspirants to organise corporate mobility movements of large groups and thus modify the prevalent social and religious customs.

The origin of the corporate mobility movements of the socially handicapped castes have been ascribed by some scholars to the modern period. It has been argued that corporate mobility movements have been made possible by the modern transport facilities, such as the railways and communication media, such as the printing press.<sup>39</sup> But the different trends in the temple-building of the *Nabasakh*, *Ajalchal*, intermediary and *Antyaj* castes show that corporate mobility movements could originate and bring about social changes without the help of modern agencies, such as railways and the press. In fact, the corporate mobility movement in the traditional society of Bengal had originated due to certain historical circumstances which had pushed up the *Nabasakh*, *Ajalchal*, intermediary and *Antyaj* castes to an elevated position of prosperity and power. On the other hand, it was possible because the

## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

caste system admitted of revision of the composition of different ranks and recognition of social forces thrown by historical developments in the form of elevation of lower castes to higher ranks. It is significant that the breakdown of the rigidities in the occupational structure due to limited external pressure during the 18th century had given rise to a series of changes which were organised by large groups of lower castes through traditional media such as temple-building. Such developments could not have been possible if absolute faith in the law of *karma*, the concern and value attached to ritual purity and constant indoctrination by the upper castes could, as has been argued by some, keep the lower castes pinned down to the lower ranks<sup>30</sup> or the organisation of movements of large groups could not be made possible without the help of modern transport facilities and communication media. The experience of Bengal shows that caste system had the potential of revision of the ritual rank of the different lower castes in terms of upward mobility in the hierarchy. This opportunity of upward mobility seems to have led the new social forces vertically along the hierarchical scale. The new forces were not permitted to accumulate at the different lower stages and to expand horizontally and thus to cause breaches in the foundation and substructure of the hierarchical system. Thus the *status quo* was maintained.

TABLE 1

*Caste Background of Founders of Temples : number in each period and percentage to total number of temples reckoned*

CASTE GROUP	P E R I O D S							
	1700 - 1750		1750 - 1800		1800 - 1850		1850 - 1900	
	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.
Upper Castes	78	72.9	182	52.3	230	52.3	188	53.6
Nabasakh, inter- mediary, Ajalchal and Antyaj Castes	29	27.1	166	47.7	210	47.7	163	46.4
Total	107	100.00	348	100.00	440	100.00	351	100.00

# TEMPLE PROMOTION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

TABLE 2

*Typewise Break-up of Temples Founded by Upper Castes: number in each period and percentage to total number of temples reckoned*

TYPES	P E R I O D S							
	1700 - 1750		1750 - 1800		1800 - 1850		1850 - 1900	
	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.
Chala	50	69.4	115	65.7	116	51.6	88	47.6
Ratna	13	18.1	36	20.6	43	19.1	25	13.5
Sikhara	3	4.2	10	5.7	42	18.7	40	21.6
Dalan	1	1.4	4	2.3	12	5.3	12	6.5
Others	5	6.9	10	5.7	12	5.3	20	10.8
TOTAL	72	100.00	175	100.00	225	100.00	185	100.00

TABLE 3

*Typewise Break-up of Temples Founded by Nabasakh, Intermediary, Ajalchal and Antyaj castes: number in each period and percentage to total number of temple reckoned*

TYPES	P E R I O D S							
	1700 - 1750		1750 - 1800		1800 - 1850		1850 - 1900	
	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.	No.	p.c.
Chala	20	74.1	98	61.3	74	35.9	40	24.8
Ratna	4	14.8	33	20.6	50	24.3	40	24.8
Sikhara	2	7.4	12	7.5	38	18.4	36	22.4
Dalan	—	—	7	4.4	36	17.5	32	19.9
Others	1	3.7	10	6.2	8	3.9	13	8.1
TOTAL	27	100.00	160	100.00	206	100.00	161	100.00

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Two areas in southwestern Bengal deserve special mention. These are: (1) northeastern part of Midnapore district and the contiguous tracts covered by the southwestern part of Hooghly district and the eastern part of Bankura district and (2) southern and central parts of Burdwan district. Series of villages with temples may be found almost all over these two areas. Smaller concentrations of villages with temples are frequently found in southwest Bengal.



The tendency of concentration may also be marked in the cases of individual villages and towns both within and outside these areas. According to the available data, there are nearly one hundred villages with more than five to ten temples, thirtyone with ten to fifteen temples and twentyone with fifteen to twenty temples. In some places such as Ramjibanpur, Chandra-kona (both in Midnapore), Bishnupur, Jaykrishnapur (both in Bankura), Karidhya, Ganpur (both in Birbhum) and Maluti (in Santal Parganas, Bihar, but adjoining northwest Birbhum) the number of temples range between forty and fifty and even more.

<sup>2</sup> Usually the regional Bengali temples, both square and oblong in plan, measure between 10' to 20' in length and breadth and between 20' to 40' in height.

<sup>3</sup> Literally *chala* means a roof or a part of it, made of fragile materials such as straw or semi-permanent materials such as tile and corrugated iron sheets. The typical Bengali *chala* is ellipsoidal both in vertical and horizontal sections and is distinguished by a gentle curvature of form which is obtained by bending the flexible bamboo sticks with which the inner frame of the roof is made. The ellipsoidal elevation indicated by the bamboo frame set on a bamboo or wooden inner structure is developed into a smooth and pleasant form through the thatched cover which largely accounts for the pleasing freshness of the autochthonous Bengali structure. The curvilinear form of the brick-built *chala* temples was designed after the thatched roof of these huts with certain modifications necessitated by the change of material and techniques of construction.

The *chala* huts may be classified into at least five sub-groups according to the number of *chalas* composing the roof. However the major bulk of the *chala* huts belong to three sub-groups. These are *dochala*, *charchala* and *atchala*. The *dochala* or the two-winged roof composed of two (*do*) oblong *chalas* (used here as parts or wings of a *chala* roof) inclining towards each other to form a ridge at the top, is a fairly common variety and is found almost all over Bengal. Among the rest of the sub-groups the *charchala* is the most popular. The *charchala* roof is made of four (*char*) *chalas* which, rising from the top of the wall, gradually incline towards the centre till they meet each other to form the apex (Figure 1, upper part of the main building). Mostly concentrated in the southwestern part of Bengal the *atchala* superstructure is usually associated with double-storeyed huts in which the roof made of eight (*at*) *chalas* is built in two successive stages. The lower stage is composed of four *chalas*, usually shorter in breadth, placed approximately at the middle of the structure for shading the porches around the ground floor or protecting the middle of the tall walls in cases of absence of the porches. The remaining four *chalas* constitute the *charchala* roof of the upper storey (Fig. 1, main building).

The three major varieties of *chala* huts introduced above were mostly imitated in designing the *chala* temples. It is only in the case of the *atchala* temples that major modifications were made in the form of the structure. *Atchala* temples are single storeyed. Consequently, its form above the substructure is substantially different from that of the *atchala* hut. In the *atchala* temple the lower *charchala* forms the roof. The upper part, a miniature *charchala* structure, is placed on the truncated top of the lower *charchala*.

The substructure of the *chala* temples are also found to have been designed in conformity with the convex form of the *chala* design. Its top is bent like a bow in imitation of the form of the hut walls below the curved edge of the drooping roof and is usually surmounted by curved eaves composed of several mouldings. This modification has been necessitated by the change of material. In the huts the drooping roof projects from the top of the wall for about 2' to protect the mud wall from rain water. The roof in permanent material could not be made to project in this manner; nor was it necessary to protect the brick walls from rain water. The curved edge of the roof, therefore, rests slightly above the level of the wall. The curved top of the wall designed after the form of the hut walls below the curved edge of the fragile roof fits into the design of the *chala* roof built in permanent material (Figures 1, 2 and 3).

<sup>4</sup> Basically, the *sikhara* type of the temple consists of a square cella surmounted by a curvilinear tower (*sikhara*) square in cross-section and truncated at the top. Externally, each of the walls of the cella and the faces of the tower remain vertically divided into several successively projecting planes, usually three, five or seven in number, in pursuance of the arrangement of the successive projections on plan. At its flat top the tower carries a flatly designed heavy architectural element, circular in cross-section, called *amalaka*. It rests on a recessed pedestal intervening between the *sikhara*'s top and the *amalaka*. The earliest examples of the *sikhara* type go back to the sixth century A.D. In course of the next six centuries it had spread all over northern and central India where several regional versions of the type had flourished and had even penetrated in the south where a distinct version of the *sikhara* type called the *Dakhani* was evolved.

## TEMPLE PROMOTION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

<sup>4</sup> Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Hindu and Buddhist Period)*, Taraporewala Reprint, (Bombay, 1965), 150.

<sup>5</sup> The local hierarchy of castes in Bengal is composed of six successive groups. These are (1) Brahman, (2) Baidya and Kayastha, (3) *Nabasakh*, (4) *Ajalchal*, (5) an intermediary group middling between (3) and (4), and (6) *Antyaj*. Broadly, these groups may be classified into two viz., the Brahmans and the Sudras, there being no Kshatriya and Vaisya element in the indigenous population of Bengal. Ritually, the rank of the Baidya and the Kayasthas is same as those of the *Nabasakhs* with whom they constitute the upper strata of the Bengali Sudras known as *satsudra* (*sai* meaning clean). They are also referred to as *jalacharaniya* Sudras because of their right to offer drinking water to the clean Brahmans who can minister to them without defilement. However, in the secular context the Baidyas and the Kayasthas, who were mostly landholders and professionals, occupy a much higher position and thus enjoy a much higher rank than the *Nabasakhs*, who are mostly traders, manufacturers and agriculturists. It is due to this reason that the Brahmans, Baidyas and Kayasthas are usually combined together and referred to as *uchhajati*, i.e., higher castes.

The *Ajalchals* do not have the right to offer drinking water to the clean Brahmans or to the castes who are collectively known as *satsudras*. They are served by degraded Brahmans, particular groups of which are attached to the different individual *Ajalchal* castes. The intermediary castes are entitled to offer drinking water to the clean Brahmans and the *satsudras* but are not entitled to be ministered to by the clean Brahmans. Like the *Ajalchal* castes they are also ministered by degraded Brahmans. The *Antyajas* form the lowest strata of the caste hierarchy. Even the *Ajalchal* castes cannot accept drinking water from an *Antyaj* without losing his caste.

<sup>6</sup> M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, (Bombay, 1962), 42-62.

<sup>7</sup> Nirmal Kumar Bose, "Class and Caste", *Culture and Society in India*, (Bombay, 1967), 239-40.

<sup>8</sup> Mukundaram Chakrabarty, *Kabikankan Chandi*, (in Bengali), Part 1, ed. Iswar Tarkachuramani, (Calcutta, 1897), 90.

<sup>9</sup> Bharatchandra Roy Gunakar, "Annadamangal", *Bharatchandra Granthabali*, (in Bengali), ed. S. Das and B. Bandopadhyaya, (Calcutta, 1962), 171.

<sup>10</sup> N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, II, (Calcutta, 1962), 10-19.

<sup>11</sup> The Sadgops are mostly found in the southwestern part of Bengal. The areas in which they are found to concentrate may be divided into two consolidated zones, one in the northern part of southwestern Bengal and the other on southern part of the region. The northern zone consists of the central portion of the northern part of Burdwan district, the southern part of Birbhum district and the adjoining Kandi subdivision of Mursidabad district. The southern zone consists of the southwestern, western and northwestern parts of Midnapore district, the southern and southeastern parts of Bankura district which adjoins northern Midnapore and the southwestern part of Arambag subdivision of Hooghly district which is contiguous to both northern Midnapore and southeastern Bankura.

Although the Chashi Kaibartas are a common Bengali caste, the greater majority of them live in the eastern part of Midnapore district and in the contiguous areas of the Uluberia subdivision of Howrah district and the southwestern part of the Arambag subdivision in Hooghly district. However, the prosperity and power of the caste do not seem to have attained significant proportions in the Hooghly part of their concentration.

<sup>12</sup> The leaders of the agriculturist Gops had built up political power both in the northern and in the southern zone. In the northern zone political power was mainly held by the Rajas of Gopbhum. Gopbhum roughly corresponds to the central portion of northern Burdwan. They ruled the area with the help of subordinate chiefs stationed at different centres (*vide* J. C. K. Peterson, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Burdwan* (Calcutta, 1910), 21, 22 and 193). The Rajas of Amragarh maintained semi-independent status up to 1694 when Gopbhum was placed under the tutelage of Raja Krishnaram Roy of Burdwan under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. About 1744 Raja Chitrasen Roy of Burdwan forcibly annexed Gopbhum to his own territories (*vide* Rakhaldas Mukhopadhyaya, *Bardhamana-rajavamsanucharita*, (in Bengali), (Burdwan, 1914), 5 and Appendix 5; and Peterson, *op. cit.*, 193). In the southern zone the political power of the caste was represented by the Karnagarh Raj in north Midnapore and the Narayangarh Raj in south Midnapore. It appears that the Karnagarh Raj was established in the first half of the 16th century and continued up to the eighth decade of the 18th century (*vide* Moore's *Indian Appeals*, 1846-50, 299-301). The semi-independent Karnagarh Raj was one of the most important of the *zamindaris* in the *Jangal Mahal*, i.e., the famous jungle tract which spread over the western and southwestern parts of Bankura district, the eastern and southern parts of Purulia district, the eastern part of Singhbhum district in Bihar and the western half of the Midnapore

district and controlled some of the chieftains ruling over the different parts of the area (*vide* J. C. Price, *Notes on the History of Midnapore*, 29 and 30). The Narayangarh Raj was a local potentate of the Mughals from the 16th century. Later they submitted to the British authority and helped them against the Marathas (*vide* Trailokyanath Pal, *Medinipurer Itihas*, I, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1888), 20 and 22; and L. S. S. O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Midnapore*, (Calcutta, 1911), 126).

The Chashi Kaibarttas rose to political eminence particularly in eastern Midnapore. There were several large landowning families belonging to this caste such as the Rajas of Tamluk, Mayna, Sujamutha, Khandarui and Birkul, and the zamindars of Hat Gopalpur, Kelomal and Dattamutha who held most of the lands of eastern Midnapore in farm in the second half of the 18th century. Some of these families are of considerable antiquity and date back to at least the middle of the 17th century. The lands held by these landholders include the extensive salt producing areas in Midnapore. Both the Mughals and the Bengal Nawabs had considerable interest in the production of salt and trade in salt which they sought to control by appointing state patronised merchants. Yet, they never tried to make the salt producing areas *khas*, i.e., crown-land. The right of immediate control of these areas were left in the hands of the local landholders (*vide* H. V. Bayley, *Memoranda of Midnapore* (written in 1852, but published in 1902 in Calcutta), 19, 22-24 and 27-34; O'Malley, *op. cit.*, 30-35, 40-43 and 52; Jogeshchandra Basu, *Medinipurer Itihas* (in Bengali). (Calcutta, 1936), 509-87).

<sup>16</sup> Hitesranjan Sanjal, "Continuities of Social Mobility in Traditional and Modern Society in India: Two Case Studies of Caste Mobility in Bengal", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXX, No. 2, February, 1971, 322-26.

<sup>17</sup> J. Westland noted that in Jessore district (which also included Khulna district) "the zamindars were in habit of constantly imposing cesses on the ryots." Cesses were imposed for collection expenses, for *faujdari* functions as well as on occasions of birth, marriage and death. These casual cesses had become regular. Besides, tax had to be paid on all things brought to the *hat* (weekly or bi-weekly market) for sale. "These and other less definite cesses added to the ryots' jumma usually about 60 per cent, but sometimes as much as 90 or even 120" (*Report on the District of Jessore*, (Calcutta, 1871), 97). These cesses were common in the different parts of Bengal. However, there were other varieties of cesses also. For details, see Sinha, *op. cit.*, 18-19, 37 and 134-37.

<sup>18</sup> Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*. (Bombay, 1963), 178.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 90, 110 and 190.

<sup>20</sup> A group of the Chashi Kaibarttas of Midnapore and Howrah districts were originally mulberry planters. Like the Telis of these districts they are also known to have reared cocoons (*vide* Radhasyam Guin, "Medinipur Jelar Resam Chash", (in Bengali), *Krishitattva*, Part-IV, No. 5). Extending further, they took to silk reeling both by the indigenous method and by using filature and ultimately traded in silk. A few Chashi Kaibartta families who had made fortune by manufacturing silk and trading in that article are the Maitis of Orfuli, Mandals of Ashanda (both in Howrah district), Beras of Sridharpur in Sabang area, Mandals of Brahmanabasan, Samantas of Sridharpur in Daspur area, Chowdhuries of Bejua, Mandals of Goura, Guchhait, Panjas of Kalaikunda, Bhumiyas of Manua, Charans of Ajurya and Maitis of Palaspai and Sonakhali (all places in Midnapore). Illustrative cases of similar Teli families are the Pals of Kalyanpur (Howrah) and the Sinhas of Daspur (Midnapore). A few Teli families in Mursidabad were prominent in silk trade. The most important of these families are the Nandis of Kasimbazar. The Bishayis of Dharammasagar and Nimtala (Midnapore) who belong to the Napit caste came into prominence as traders in silk (cf. Panchanan Roy Kavyatirtha, *Daspurer Itihas*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1959, 34-35).

<sup>21</sup> The large settlement of the Chandals at Kharar (Midnapore) was a flourishing centre of brass and bell-metal industry and trade in utensils made of those materials during the 19th and the 20th centuries.

<sup>22</sup> The iron smelting and refining industries of the *Lohamahar* area in the northwestern part of Birbhum district was practically monopolised by the Kalus and the Telis. Particularly noticeable are the settlements of Kalu and Teli entrepreneurs at Ganpur, Chilla, Lohabazar, Damra and Balia-Narayanpur all of which are still remarkable for the large deposits of slag.

<sup>23</sup> The Chashi Kaibarttas of Khanila-Jaypur area (Howrah) figured prominently in the cities of Calcutta and Howrah as hardware merchants in the second half of the 19th century and by the end of the century and the beginning of the 20th century many of them had established themselves in the city of Howrah as small-scale entrepreneurs in scrap iron and engineering industries.

## TEMPLE PROMOTION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

<sup>22</sup> Prominent indigenous traders in the internal trade of Bengal during the 19th century and early 20th century were mostly Tell, Sunri and Tambuli by caste. In fact, "Throughout East and North Bengal which is the richest part of the province the internal trade was in the hands of the various trading castes like the Sahas and Tiliis" (Nilmani Mukherji, "Foreign and Internal Trade", in *History of Bengal (1757-1905)*, ed. N. K. Sinha, (Calcutta, 1967), 372-73). For references to the activities of these trading castes in the 19th and 20th century, see R. N. Sen, *Report on the Agricultural Statistics of Jheniadah, Magurah, Bagirhat and Sunderban Subdivision*, (Calcutta, 1874), cited in Benoy K. Chowdhury, "Agrarian Economy and Agrarian Relations in Bengal (1859-1865)" in *The History of Bengal (1757-1905)*, *op. cit.*, 318-19; W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, (London, 1876), VIII, 44 and 46; IX, 30 and 32; H. H. Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, II, (Calcutta, 1896), 279, 307 and 309; *Vaisyatattva-darpan*, (in Bengali), revised and enlarged by Nityananda Thakur, (Calcutta, 1912?), 32 and 34-35; Harihar Seth, *Sankshipta Chhandannagar Parichay*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1963), 27; and Hasirasi Devi, *Kusdaher Itihas*, (in Bengali), (Calcutta, 1968), 131-165.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Francis Buchanan, *Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of the District or Zila of Dinajpur*, (Calcutta, 1833), 150; and Chowdhuri, *op. cit.*, 318-19.

<sup>24</sup> For an idea regarding the process of subinfeudation, see D. J. McNiele, *Memorandum on the Revenue Administration in the Lower Provinces of Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1873), 15-16. See also N. K. Sinha, "Administrative, Economic and Social History: 1757-1793" in *History of Bengal*, *op. cit.*, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Some of the reputed Kabi poets and songsters and Jatra actors belonging to the lower castes are named below: Bhola Mayra, Bhabani Bene, Kailas Barui (*Nabasakh*), Bholanath Das, Gaganchandra Das (*Ajalchal*), Thakur Jogi, Sibe Jogi, Jaineswar Dhopa and Krishnachandra Charnakar (*Antyaf*) [vide Susil Kumar De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century 1757-1857*, (Calcutta, 1962), 401-412; and Manindranath As, *Kabial Kailas Barui-O-Bidyasundar Jatra*, (Calcutta, 1967), 27-28, and 46-47].

<sup>26</sup> De, *op. cit.*, 279.

<sup>27</sup> *Vide supra* note 7.

<sup>28</sup> *loc. cit.*; and M. N. Srinivas, *Social Changes in Modern India*, (Allied Publishers, 1966) 46-53.

<sup>29</sup> Burton Stien, "Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Sects," *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, An Introductory Symposium, (Comprehensive Studies in Society and History Supplement, III), 78-94.

<sup>30</sup> Srinivas, *op. cit.*, (1962).

## EXPLANATION OF FIGURES

1. Two thatched huts in Midnapore district representing the typical Bengali hut-type. The main structure belongs to the *atchala* subgroup. The lower *chalas* in the front and on the left side are meant for protecting the walls from rain water and those at back (partially visible) and along the right side (not visible) are used for roofing the open porches. The roof of the upper storey is composed of four curved *chalas*, two trapezoid and two triangular. They meet each other to form the apex of the structure. It is this form which is usually found to have been imitated in the upper *charchala* of the oblong *atchala* temple [Fig. 9(b)].

The lower *charchalas* have straight eaves which are also repeated in the smaller *charchala* on the dexter.

2. Three *charchala* Siva temples in Ganpur (Birbhum). These temples form a part of the complex of temples remaining adjacent to the temple of Kali in the village. Such complexes, usually found in the districts of Birbhum and Mursidabad, are built over a long period of time, often by successive generations of founders, but arranged in rows around a rectangular court. According to the accompanying inscriptions these three temples of Ganpur (from left to right) were built in 1773, 1768 and 1768 respectively.

Square on plan, the cella in each case is surmounted by a curvilinear *charchala* superstructure composed of four triangular *chalas* inclining towards each other and finally meeting at a point which is the apex of the structure. The inverted offsets at the bottom of the *chalas* appear to represent the thickness of the actual *chalas* of the huts.

The front façades of the temples are decorated with figurative panels carved out of a kind of soft laterite known as *fulpathar*, the replacement for the usual medium of terracotta in Birbhum, particularly in the western part of the district. With its horizontal and vertical arrangement the scheme of decoration emphasises the major lines of the structure.

3. Krishna Ray temple (1685) at Khanlla (Howrah district). Compare with Figure 1 for the extent of modification of the *atchala* form in permanent material (*vide* Note 2). It is a representative example of the *atchala* sub-type which is the most popular form of temple in Bengal. The stairs attached to the right wall lead to the floor which has been laid a few years back near the middle of the cella's height in order to keep the deities above the level of flood water which has recently gone up in this area. As usual in the cases of the comparatively larger structures (this temple measures 17'4" x 17'2"), the interior of the temple is divided into two parts, the cella and the porch. The porch, which accommodates small gatherings of devotees, is screened off from the cella by a load-bearing wall with an opening at the centre. However, it is approached from outside by a set of triple doors separated from each other by two heavily built stunted piers. Its front façade is decorated mostly by non-figurative motifs and designs as seen in a large number of 17th century temples.

The corrugated tin shade in front has been built for congregation on occasions of festivals. In case of large congregations devotees spread out in the open space beyond the varandah and the shade.

4. Gopcsvara Siva temple (1732) at Baikunthapur (Burdwan district). It is a typical example of the simplified form of the late *sikhara*s of Bengal. The graded projections with shallow indentations on the structure are reminiscent of the buttress-like *rathaka* projections of the *sikhara* temple which divide the exterior of the structure vertically. The projections in this case have lost their structural significance; they function as simple agents of variegation.

The tower, i.e., the superstructure of this temple is marked by sharp inward inclination right from the beginning and ultimately assumes the form of a stunted cone. It is due to this nature of the outline that the superstructure loses the vertical significance which is one of the major characteristic features of the *sikhara* form. Remaining on the top of the conical tower the crowing section including the *amalaka* (now entirely lost except for the element at the bottom) has failed to assume volume and has, therefore, lost structural importance. The closely set horizontal bands on the superstructure refer to the structurally viable horizontal divisions of the *sikhara* superstructure. In this case the bands simply variegate the body of the *sikhara*.

An isolated structure, the temple stands on an open piece of land adjacent to the road which passes through a number of villages and connect them with the main road of the area leading to the old town of Burdwan. The junction is not far from the temple. The temple thus stands in the full view of large number of people walking up and down the road.

Like scores of its counterparts in the villages of Bengal, the temple is now abandoned and dangerously overgrown. However, it still retains its public utility by offering free space for pasting election posters of rival candidates on the walls and for sticking flattened lumps of cowdung along the elevation of the basement where they are dried before being used as fuel.

5. Temple of Lakshmi-Narayana (1718) at Metyala (Bankura district). While the substructure of the temple resembles the *chala* temple in its bent top, curved cornice and low humped roof (invisible due to the rows of crenellation fencing the roof), the components of the superstructure represent the simplified Bengali *sikhara* (compare Figures 2, 3 and 4). Its superstructure is composed of five (*pancha*) pinnacles (*ratnas*) and hence the temple belongs to the *pancharatna* sub-type of the *ratna* type of temple.

The temple stands on an open grassy court on an elevated piece of land which is situated on the main road of the village (not visible). An elderly villager has stopped for a while in front of the temple to bow to the deity before proceeding for his destination. A youngman, a stranger to the village, marks the terracotta plaques set in horizontal and vertical rows around the arched openings as well as on the spandrels. The plaques represent religious themes. Hence looking at them is supposed to be a meritorious act.

The structure at the back of the temple is a part of the broken compound wall which once enclosed the homestead of the founder's family.

6. A group of temples in the village of Bawali (Twentyfour Parganas district). The temples were built under the aegis of the Mandal family of the village.

The octagonal structure in the foreground with opening on all the sides is the Rasmancha (1789). Vaishnava deities, usually Radha and Krishna, are placed in the Rasmancha during the Ras festival so that people may have a view of the deities on that auspicious occasion. Its superstructure is composed of eight pinnacles placed on the corners of the building and arranged around the central pinnacle which is larger than the rest. The pinnacles have been designed after the form of a jar covered by a high lid. The surface of the jar has been variegated like the bulb. This is the standard design of Rasmancha in Bengal.

Across the road which is the main thoroughfare of the village stands the temple of Gopinatha (1794). It is a *navaratna* temple. The superstructure of this temple is distinguished by nine



(*nava*) pinnacles (*ratna*) distributed over two successive storeys. The lower storey with its curved top forms the substructure. On the top it carries four pinnacles at the corners and the upper storey which is a complete *pancharatna* in the middle. The temple is preceded by an oblong hall (*mandapa*) with open sides and flat roof. Devotees congregate in this hall on festive occasions, as also to attend discourses on religious texts or performances of devotional songs for which the structure is also used.

The heap of debris on the left of the *navaratna* is the ruins of a Dolmancha which is used for publicly displaying Vaishnava deities on occasion of the Dol festival. A little up the road is situated the *atchala* temple of Siva (1758). The upper part of the superstructure of this temple sticks out in the background between the Ramnancha and the Gopinatha temple. At the rear of the Gopinatha temple is seen a part of the *mandapa* of the Radhakanta temple (1771) which is reached by a lane passing between the *navaratna* and the ruined Dolmancha.

There are a few more temples in the vicinity of this group. Similar groups of temples are fairly common in the villages in which some people had become prosperous in the 17th, 18th or the 19th century.

7. Plan, single porched hut. This is the most popular variety of hut plan in Bengal. The bamboo posts in the porch are meant to support the extension of the roof on the porch. Compare Figures 9 and 11 for its adoption in the temples.

8. Plan, four porched hut. A common variety in Bengali huts. Compare Figure 10.

9 (a), (b) and (c). Plan and elevation, Siva temple (1753). Syamganj, Kalna (Burdwan district).

The inordinate thickness of the walls, the sectioning of the inner roof of the cella into smaller units, the heavy and solidly built transverse arches used for separating these units appear to have been conceived as the means for negotiating the enormous dead load of the solidly built superstructure (b) which may have otherwise jeopardised the stability of the building. However, the transverse arches, the springing points of which are much lower than the bases of the vaults and the dome (c), impinge additional weight on the walls. Mark the use of corbelled vaults along with the arched elements, such as the dome and the arches. The porch has been roofed by a vault.

The *atchala* superstructure rests on the walls and the inner roof composed of vaults, arches and dome (the undulating base of the superstructure is concealed by plaster above the walls and by its forward portions above the inner roof: hence the indications of continuity). It is not structurally connected with the portion below. The walls terminate at the bases of the vaults and the dome. The superstructure above these points is made by lumping bricks and brickbats set on layers of mortar. The neat outline has been obtained by plastering the surface of the modelled form with thick coats of lime and brickdust.

10. Plan, Madanamohana temple (1696). Bishnupur (Baukura district). Based on the four-porched hut plan (compare Figure 8) it is one of the few neatly designed temple plans in Bengal. Construction of the interior roof follows the alignment of the plan. Judged by the standard of construction found in the comparatively larger *chala* and *ratna* temples in which the interior is divided into two or more parts, this is a case of rare accomplishment. Such clarity in defining the relationship between the plan and the construction, however, is found to be confined to the larger *ratna* temples a series of which were built under the patronage of the Malla Rajas of Bishnupur.

The superstructure of this single-pinnacled temple is composed of a low humped roof around the pinnacle. The *sikhara*-shaped pinnacle stands on a pedestal which is located above the central part of the substructure. As a *sikhara* structure it encloses a vacant space. Its height is less than the height of the substructure. Naturally the weight of such a superstructure is much lesser than that of an *atchala* superstructure which occupies the whole of the roof space and is nearly equal to the substructure in height (Figure 9). Yet, the walls, particularly those enclosing the cella, have been made much thicker than what would have been necessary even in case of the temple being provided with an *atchala* superstructure.

The architect appears to have been aware of this extravagance and the unreasonable blockage of space by the enormous expansion of the width of the walls. Perhaps it is due to this reason that attempts were made to rationalise the situation by carving out antechambers and a staircase within the thickness of the walls. The antechambers and the staircase have, no doubt, been integrated with the general scheme of the plan and have enriched the design. However, the idea of adding these elements originated in a condition arising from the failure to resolve the basic problem of establishing a logical relationship between space and volume on the one hand and the substructure and the superstructure on the other.

In sharp contrast to the naivete indicated above, the construction of the interior roof

testifies to the high level of expertise in arcuate construction attained by the Bishnupur architects. Large spaces have been spanned by barrel vaults. In the cella squinch arches have been constructed at the corners to prepare the base of a dome the diameter of which is smaller than the diagonal of the chamber. However, it is intriguing that this expertise in building technology did not lead to an attempt to rationalise the construction of the building in terms of the basic principles of architecture and to conceive the entire temple as an integrated structure.

11 (a), (b) and (c). Plan and elevation, Sridharanatha temple (middle of the 19th century), Kharar (Midnapore district).

Internally the temple has been divided into three lateral parts. This is an elaboration of the single-porched hut plan (compare Figure 7). The section at the middle is broader than the rest. This is the cella. More than two-thirds of the main component of the *navaratna* superstructure of the temple, i.e., the central *pancharatna* which occupies the middle of the substructure's roof stands directly above the cella. Hence the cella carries the bulk of its enormous load (b and c). Diagrams of the plan and the elevation show that the construction of the cella has received special attention. Its front and side walls are the thickest of all the walls used in the building and its interior roof has been sectioned into four units.

The front wall of the temple, the walls enclosing the staircase at the back of the cella and the transverse walls beyond the cella vary from each other in respect of width. Ostensibly these variations have been made in order to save space for the porch in front of the cella and the staircase at its back. It is the combination of the inability to organise a given space properly and the concern for the stability of the substructure carrying a heavy *pancharatna* on its top which seems to have led to the particular emphasis on the construction of the cella.

The interior roof of the cella has been sectioned irregularly and its construction is anomalous (a). The three vaults differ from each other in size and the heavy arch separating the vault on the dexter from the central one hang down the walls at the level which is much lower than the base line of the vaults. Apart from creating incongruity in the composition of the interior roof, the arch, which is meant to strengthen the construction, puts additional load on the walls.

The superstructure brings out the essential inconsistencies in the *ratna* temple structure. The *ratnas* at the corners as well as the *pancharatna* occupying the middle are structurally independent units placed on the finished roof of the substructure. Similarly, the self-contained *ratnas* of the central *pancharatna* have no organic connection with the section below.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

**ARCH** (Latin *arcus*=an arch of a curve, an arch). A structure formed by a segment of a large circle. Made of wedge-shaped blocks of brick or stone over an opening or any other given space, so disposed as to hold together when supported only from the sides (Figs. 9 a, b and 11 a, b, c).

**CHALA** (Bengali *chal*=sloping roof made of fragile materials). A room with sloping roof usually with convex curved contour (Fig. 1 and its explanation); *Chala* is an order of Bengali temple designed after the form of the *Chala*.

*Char c.*, at c temple illustrated in Figs. 2, 3 and 9 b, c; see Explanation of Figures.

**CHHATRI** (Sanskrit *Chhatra*=a covering, umbrella). An umbrella-shaped dome or vault on a pavilion. *Bangali c.* dome or vault with convex curved eaves and contour designed after the Bengali CHALA roof as in Mughal and Rajput architecture.

**CORBEL** (French *corbel*=a raven, hence beak-like projection). A block of stone or a piece of brick projecting from a wall, supporting a VAULT or DOME or forming these by successive advancement of blocks of stone or bricks (Fig. 9 a, c).

**DALAN** (Persian *dalan*=a hall, vestibule, corridor). An order of Bengali temple with a flat roof.

**DOME** a vault of even curvature erected on a circular base. The section can be segmental, semicircular, pointed or bulbous (Figs. 9 a, b, c).

**RATNA** (Sanskrit *ratna*=a precious material, gem). An order of Bengali temple with a superstructure distinguished by pinnacles called *ratna*.

*Pancha r.*, *nava r.*, temples illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6; see Explanation of Figures.

**SIKHARA** (Sanskrit *sikhara*=peak of a mountain). An order of north Indian temple with a convex curved tower.

**VAULT** An arched ceiling or a roof of stone or brick usually of semicircular or pointed section (Figs. 9 a, b and 11 a, b, c).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Prof. Barun De, Shri Amit Ghosh and the Oxford University Press for their kind help in completing this paper. Prof. De read the first draft of the paper and offered valuable comments. The diagrams used in this paper have been prepared by Shri Ghosh. The present reproductions of the diagrams are based on the art pulls prepared by Oxford University Press.





# Bengali Linguistic Historiography

SISIR KUMAR DAS

NINETEENTH century linguistic research is distinguished by its emphasis on the idea of evolution. Instead of looking at a language as a fixed entity, the nineteenth century scholar regarded it as something continually changing. The sudden flash of knowledge derived from the discovery of Sanskrit and its possible relation to the various languages of Europe and Asia, as claimed in the historic speech of William Jones in 1786, gave an impetus to the search for the *ursprache*, the original language, from which all other languages were 'born'. The grammarians of that century were the first to establish relations between various languages, to throw light on the process of their growth and to construct 'laws' of sound change. The concept of evolution was further vindicated by Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) which greatly influenced almost all branches of thought. Languages, too, were often thought as organism, which are born, develop and die. Undoubtedly, such words as 'birth' or 'growth' or 'death' of a language were used in a metaphorical sense but traces of a biological approach lurked behind these metaphors. It was soon found that the laws of sound change were not the inexorable laws of physical science and they had many exceptions. It was also realised that language had to be studied not as a living organism but as a social fact and as a system of signs where the relation between the signifier and signified is arbitrary. The labours of scholars engaged in comparative study of languages made it possible to reconstruct a proto-stage of a given group of related languages, though a purely notional one, and it became possible to construct the history of a language. In this century, to quote Jespersen, "linguistic forms were not only described and analysed, but also explained, their genesis being traced as far back as historical evidence allowed, if not sometimes further. Instead of contending itself with stating when and where a form existed, and how it looked and was employed, linguistic science now also began to ask why it had taken that definite shape, and thus passed from a purely descriptive to an explanatory science."<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered, however, that the explanation offered by linguistics was not in terms of social, or

political relation with languages, but in terms of its own methodology. Grimm's law, for example, was formulated on the basis of his observation of regular correspondences between Germanic obstruents and those in the other related languages. Very soon exceptions to this law were discovered. For example, it was found that proto-Indo-European voiceless stops did not change in Germanic when they occurred after fricatives (e.g. Latin, *noctis* 'night', Gothic, *nahts*; and Greek, *skotos* 'darkness' and Gothic, *skadus* 'shadow'). The explanation of such exceptions was to be found in the environment. Similarly, it was noticed that Germanic voiced fricatives and stops did not correspond to voiced unaspirated stops (e.g. Gothic *dauhtar* and Sanskrit *duhitā*). According to Grimm's Law the Sanskrit form should have been *\*dhuhitā*. Grassmann pointed out that this form as well as all such forms contained proto-Indo-European aspirates in two successive syllables which explained the 'irregularity' and demonstrated that linguistic change could not be accounted for only by examining the immediate environment but one must consider entire syllables and words.

These examples are sufficient to justify the statement of Jespersen that historical linguistics is an explanatory science. This is a useful concept to start with since the business of history of language is to explain the relation between two or several stages of one language. The nineteenth century linguist evolved a methodology which made the writing of the history of a language possible. The method of defining change and determining earlier forms is the comparative method.<sup>2</sup> This is a method of contrasting and comparing forms of two or more related languages, such as Sanskrit, Greek and Latin; and to reconstruct the forms from which they developed. In certain cases, it is also possible to reconstruct an earlier form in a language without taking other related languages into consideration—which is known as the method of internal reconstruction. All such tools along with an elaborate and rigorous framework of grammatical analysis developed in the nineteenth century laid a very strong foundation for the histories of individual languages in Europe.

Histories of Indian languages, however, could not be written in the nineteenth century. Grammatical studies which produced *Astadhyayi* or *Tolkappiyam* were virtually dead in the eighteenth century India. The works of Christian missionaries and British administrators who were the pioneers in the revival of grammatical studies in the nineteenth century, were hasty, inadequate and often full of errors. But a few scholars of high erudition were attracted to the virgin field of Indian languages. Bloomfield says that there are two ways of studying linguistic changes either by comparing related languages or by comparing different historical stages of the same language.<sup>3</sup> It was not possible to pursue the second line of investigation in respect of

modern Indian languages in the nineteenth century mainly because of the unavailability of earlier records in those languages. A people almost without a sense of chronology hardly cared to date the manuscripts or to keep a record of their linguistic documents in a systematic manner. Before a spade work was done in that direction it was not possible to talk about the different stages of these languages with confidence. The early scholar studying the change in the history of Indian languages, therefore, preferred to adopt a comparative approach. The Rev. Robert Caldwell's *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* (1856) was the first great work in this field. This work inspired John Beames to prepare *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India* (Vol. 1, 1872; Vol. 2, 1875; Vol. 3, 1879).<sup>4</sup> This tradition was followed by A. F. Rudolf Hoernle in his *A Comparative Grammar of the Gaudian Languages with Special Reference to Eastern Hindi* (1880) and R. G. Bhandarkar in his Wilson Philological lectures (1877) on Sanskrit and the Prakrit languages derived from it.<sup>5</sup> Beames, Hoernle and Bhandarkar in particular gave valuable insights into the study of individual languages like Bengali, Hindi or Marathi.

The first comprehensive and scientific account of the historical development of any Indian language is Jules Block's *La Formation de Langue Marathe* (1920). It opened a new horizon in the history of Indian linguistic studies.

## II

In the period between 1856 and 1920 few attempts were made towards the writing of a history of the Bengali language. In 1856 Rajendralal Mitra the celebrated Orientalist, wrote a brief and interesting paper in Bengali on the origin of the Bengali language.<sup>6</sup> This paper gives an account of the proto-Indo-European and the branching out of languages such as Sanskrit and Greek and Gothic from it. It mentions the laws of sound change and relates how the new Aryan languages such as Hindi and Bengali emerged through an evolution from Sanskrit and Prakrit. A similar approach is in W. S. Seton-Kerr's article in 1849—'The Bengali Language and Literature.'<sup>7</sup> Mitra's observations were used by early historians of Bengali literature in their introductory essays on the language.<sup>8</sup> In 1872 Sarada Charan Mitra wrote another interesting article on Bengali.<sup>9</sup> Bankim Chandra Chatterji too, made some valuable suggestions about the relation between Sanskrit and Bengali.<sup>10</sup> While one must admire these papers as early attempts in the study of the history of the Bengali language, they are elementary and amateurish and cannot be taken very seriously. However, they created some

interest among the general readers about the history of Bengali and at the same time were also partly responsible for the growth of many wild speculations about the origin of the Bengali language.

In the beginning of this century, Shrinath Sen, a forgotten Sanskritist, wrote a book entitled *Bhasha Tattva* (Vol. I, 1900, Vol. II, 1909). Sen's dogmatic assertion that Bengali is but a corrupt form of Sanskrit only makes his basic contentions weak and misleading. His conclusions are in line with the pre-nineteenth century European scholars' notion that development of language was actually a process of progressive corruption. Latin was believed to be a kind of corrupt Greek and the Romance languages as corrupt Latin. Sen claimed that the so-called modern Indian languages were 'corrupt' forms of spoken Sanskrit. His observations regarding the close relationship between Sanskrit and Bengali in their sound-system and morphology and syntax are confused and he ignores those facts which would shatter his thesis. This book was short-lived, but the idea of Bengali being a kind of degenerate Sanskrit, continued to warp investigation into the nature of Bengali, an important instance of it being Yogesh Chandra Vidyanidhi's *Bangala Bhasha* (1912), one of the pioneering works in the historical grammar of Bengali.

The first significant history of the Bengali language was Bijay Chandra Majumdar's *The History of the Bengali Language* published in 1920. This work consists of fourteen lectures delivered at the University of Calcutta. Its author was a poet and an anthropologist. This book is significant for two main reasons. Majumdar analysed the Bengali vocabulary and observed that a considerable number of words used in its various dialects could not be derived from Sanskrit at all. On the evidence of these words he tried to burst the 'myth' that Bengali was completely a Sanskritic language and attempted to show its affinities with non-Aryan speeches both Dravidian and Austric. Whatever be the merits of his speculations, the book at least appeared to be a corrective against the exaggerated notion that all forms of Bengali could be and should be explained in terms of Sanskrit. The book, however, suffers from an absence of a rigorous linguistic framework. The premise of non-Aryan 'influence' on Bengali is based on some anthropological evidence and intelligent conjectures. He tries to demonstrate that the non-Aryan influence in Bengali is much deeper than it is known and affirm that it extends beyond the level of lexical items. His observations on several Bengali suffixes and word-formation, though at places very refreshing, are not supported by a large body of data. His observations and conclusions are further weakened by his disregard for the process of sound change and his failure to classify his data. He tries to prove that there are a large number of lexical items in Bengali which belonged to the non-Aryan languages spoken in Bengal before the land was Aryanised. He goes a step further to show that two types of

accent, the accent on the initial syllable in Western dialects, and the accent on the non-initial syllable in Eastern dialects in Bengali are in existence. He thinks the accent on the non-initial syllable is of non-Aryan origin. He does not, however, construct a proto-stage of these dialects which could have more precisely explained the nature of accent system in Bengali. His discussion on the feature of reduplication in Bengali is equally interesting but his conclusion that it is a reflection of the non-Aryan speech is not very convincing. Had he compared this feature of Bengali with that of other modern Aryan languages he would have found that they also shared it to some extent and it could have developed independent of any foreign influence.

Majumdar wrote in the preface to his book, "The ethnic as well as the social history of a people or group of peoples must corroborate and light up the linguistic history, if the latter is to be rescued from the realm of pre-historic romance to which the story of philological origins, as often told, must be however reluctantly assigned by the critical or scientific historian of to-day."<sup>11</sup> He discards the theory of Hoernle of the inner and outer group of Aryans which he calls is based on 'imaginary migratory movements' but tries to explain the peculiarities of Bengali 'by the successive ethnic contacts and mixtures with neighbouring or surrounding indigenous peoples'. Similarly the different accent systems of Bengali according to him may be explained by ethnic miscegenation.<sup>12</sup> This bias for ethnic and social history has prompted him to devote at least three chapters to the land and people of Bengal. Whether Majumdar's views on the growth of Bengali and its relation to the social and ethnic history are correct or not, his approach deserves a thorough examination, since the emphasis on social and ethnic history has continued to exist as evidenced by many histories of language of India as well as of the West. Mario Pei, for example, in his *The Story of English* (New York, 1952) writes that "if a little geographical and political history gets intermingled within linguistic discussion, let it be remembered that is no divorcing language from other human activities". Therefore, it is essential to define what constitutes the History of Language.

The question of divorcing a language from other human activities is irrelevant since the importance of studying linguistic activity in relation to other activities has been well recognized. In a scientific study of a language, it is desirable that it should be viewed as a system and that system can be described without any reference to the society in which it is used. The usefulness of ecology is universally accepted, but that does not invalidate the study of plant-morphology which is a subject of investigation by its own right.

De Saussure is perhaps the first linguist to distinguish between what he calls 'external' and 'internal' linguistics. At one time in Europe large

number of works were written in German entitled *Reallexicon*, which is related to the word *Realien* meaning material facts of life. The emphasis of external linguistics is on *Realien*, as one finds in Majumdar's work. De Saussure differentiates the external and internal linguistics with a lovely analogy of the game of chess. "In chess," writes De Saussure, "what is external can be separated relatively easily from what is internal. The fact that the game passed from Persia to Europe is external, against that, everything having to do with its system and rules is internal. If I use ivory chessmen instead of wooden one, the change has no effect on the system, but if I decrease or increase the number of chessman, this change has a profound effect on the 'grammar' of the game."<sup>13</sup> Similarly every language has an external as well as an internal history.

The common practice among the Indian scholars writing a history of a language (any available history of an Indian language can serve as a good example) is to give information about the geographical boundaries within which the language is spoken, number of its speakers, its status in a given society, its usefulness as a medium of communication in different areas of social activity. It is equally common to talk about the vocabulary of the language, particularly about the loan words which are often shown as instances of foreign influence, and to point out the relations between language and race and culture and social and religious movements and so on and so forth. All these are extremely useful. Nonetheless, these are facts of external history of the language. The relation between language and society is a fascinating field of study. Linguistics is often used as a useful tool in historical and anthropological research. Studies in such relationship have yielded interesting results and illuminated dark areas of pre-history or social life. A study of political and social and religious history, too, often gives valuable knowledge about the source of many words in a language and explains the causes of sudden influx of new words in a language. But that should not obscure the importance of studying the internal history of a language. A proper study of the history of a language must keep the external history distinct from its internal history. Majumdar did not do it and as a result the picture that has emerged from his book is a picture of confusion.

### III

In 1926 Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji published his *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* in two volumes. Grierson wrote in his foreword to this book, "Hitherto the ordinary Bengali grammarians have been silent about the history of the language and the origin of its forms, and in popular books published in India, the wildest theories about these have

occasionally been put forth without a shadow of justification. On the other hand, Beames, Hoernle and Bhandarkar having written much that is illuminating in regard to it but sufficient materials were not available to any one of them...". Grierson points out that there are two possible lines of investigation into the making of a language. The example of the first line is to be found in Beames' where all the forms of a speech as a whole have been considered and compared with each other and then some general rules are declared. The other is to follow Trumpp, Hoernle and Block in taking one particular language as the text, examining it exhaustively, and comparing it with what is known of the others. Chatterji, needless to say, took Block's book on Marathi as his model.

Chatterji is the first among the Indian scholars to distinguish between the external and internal history of a language. He tries to keep them separate throughout the book, except in few cases. He adds a note on that point: "I had to discuss many points; some of them side issues, especially in the introduction which should be but merely touched upon in a work of a professedly linguistic character, not being immediately *a propos* for history of language..."<sup>14</sup> He devotes the *Introduction* (pp. 1-235) exclusively to the external history as well as pre-history of Bengali, the rest of the book (pp. 237-1056) being devoted to the internal history of the language. His work deals with much more than the title indicates and he mentions in the preface that it may be viewed as an essay towards Historical and Comparative Grammar of Bengali. Perhaps the magnitude of the theme justifies to some extent the largeness of the book. With touching modesty Chatterji quotes the Greek proverb *mega biblion mega kakos* in the preface.

The first important feature of this work is its vast data. No one before and after the publication of this book has handled such copious material. The literary historians in Bengal had already done admirable work in respect of discovering large number of manuscripts, determining their possible dates of composition and editing them. Dinesh Chandra Sen's *Bangabhasha O Sahitya* was thirty years old when Chatterji's book was published. The Bangiya Sahitya Parisat had already shown keen interest in philological matters and men like Ramendrasundar Trivedi and Rabindranath Tagore had published illuminating papers all of which proved to be of great importance to Chatterji. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (Vol. V, i, Calcutta, 1903), Vidyanidhi's book on Bengali and Jnanendramohan Das' lexicon were equally useful to Chatterji. Moreover, two important texts were discovered before 1926: Haraprasad Sastri discovered the manuscript of Carya songs from the Nepal Durbar Library and published an edition of it in 1916; and Basantaranjan Ray published an edition of a manuscript (which he discovered in 1907 and which is known as *Shri Krishna Kirtan*) in 1916-17 from



the Bangiya Sahitya Parisat. Chatterji used all these materials along with the materials available in the existing grammars written by foreign and native scholars. Thus this book became almost a mine of information and linguistic data. While Chatterji deserves highest praise for collecting and using a vast wealth of data, he could not, as we will try to show presently, classify and analyse his data in a systematic manner.

Chatterji has chosen Vedic as his starting point. Vedic along with Classical Sanskrit has been termed as Old Indo-Aryan. From Old Indo-Aryan grew various dialects which are known as Prakrits. The dialects of the Ashokan inscriptions: Pali, the language of Buddhist canonical and non-canonical literature; Ardha-Magadhi, the vehicle of Jaina literature; various literary Prakrits such as Maharashtri, Sauraseni etc. constitute the vast corpus of Middle Indo-Aryan. Chatterji posits an intermediate stage between Old Indo-Aryan and Middle Indo-Aryan; as well as between Middle Indo-Aryan and the period when dialects such as Hindi, Bengali, Marathi emerged. Thus he has given an elaborate—probably too detailed—account of the pre-history of Bengali. The proto-Bengali stage, however, has remained rather undefined and unsatisfactory if by *proto* we mean the stage of a language immediately before a significant change takes place affecting any part of the language area and thus causes it to split into two. Chatterji points out that Eastern Prakrit is the parent language of Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, etc. But he does not state when and how these languages had split from the parent language.<sup>15</sup> The major shortcoming, in the light of modern researches, of Chatterji's book is in its unsatisfactory analysis of language split.

A basic inquiry into the history of a language is about determining the point at which a language did split from the parent language; and to identify the significant changes—both phonemic and morphological—which mark its successive stages. No doubt, Chatterji demarcates three stages of development of Bengali which he calls Old Bengali, Middle Bengali and New Bengali, and also mentions two sub-stages within Middle Bengali which are Early Middle Bengali and Late Middle Bengali. But the criteria of identifying these stages are not always very convincing. In fact, in his treatment of phonology and morphology he has not followed the method of describing each stage of the language and explaining the changes, rather he has followed the method of tracing the history of individual elements. The obvious limitation of this method can be observed in his treatment of Bengali vowels. For example, he has stated that the vocalic *r̥* was either lost or was replaced by other vowels in the Middle Indo-Aryan stage. It follows, therefore, that the modern Indo-Aryan languages have nothing to do with it. The whole question of the replacement of *r̥* in Bengali is irrelevant since it never existed at any stage of Bengali. Similarly the question of long vowels of Sanskrit and

their development in Bengali is unnecessary. There was a coalescence of long and short vowels of Old Indo-Aryan either at some stage of one of the Middle Indo-Aryan dialects or at least at the proto-stage of Bengali. And if that is so, why one should dwell so much on the Old Indo-Aryan vowels. It is unnecessary to point out that the sources of Bengali /i/ are Old Indo-Aryan /i/ and /ī/ since Bengali emerged when there was a complete merger of short and long /i/ into /i/. There is nothing wrong in tracing the development of individual phonemes from Old Indo-Aryan to New Indo-Aryan, in fact that is extremely useful. But when a particular phoneme is lost or replaced at a certain stage, the story of that particular phoneme should end there. If the vocalic *r* is lost in middle Indo-Aryan stage, it cannot be taken up again in the history of New Indo-Aryan.

Moreover, Chatterji's description of the sources of Bengali sounds are examples of imprecise statements. Let us take one or two examples to elucidate this point. Chatterji states the sources of Bengali /p/ in initial positions as from Old Indo-Aryan *p-* and *pr-*. But it is well known that Old Indo-Aryan *pr-* becomes *p-* in Middle Indo-Aryan. Therefore, the source of Bengali *p-* should not be traced in Old Indo-Aryan *pr-*.

Take the case of the development of /ɛ/ in Bengali. Chatterji traces the initial *ɛ-* in Bengali to the initial *e-* of Old Indo-Aryan and *-ɛ-* to *-e-* of Old Indo-Aryan and *-ia-* of Middle Bengali. It is clear from his description that /e/ had two allophones [e] and [ɛ]. He has stated the environments where [ɛ] used to occur but does not show how at one stage allophone [ɛ] started contrasting with [e] and thus [ɛ] became a separate phoneme. He could have saved much space and achieved simplicity of description and that would have been more useful than tracing the sources of [ɛ] up to Old Indo-Aryan, had he stated the conditions precisely under which the phonemic change took place. Since this is perhaps the most significant innovation in Bengali vowel system let us take it more seriously and let us see if we can offer an alternative and a more simple solution.

[ɛ] occurred in the following environments in Middle Bengali

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{(i)} \quad C - C\text{ɔ} \\ \text{(ii)} \quad C - \left[ \begin{array}{c} N \\ R \\ Ve \end{array} \right] C \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{ɔ} \\ a \end{array} \right] \end{array}$$

(C = any consonant, N = any nasal consonant, R = flapped consonant and Ve = any velar stop)

Take these examples :      / dekhɔe /      [d ɛ khɔe]      'he sees'  
    / dekhɔhɔ /      [d ɛ khɔhɔ]      'you see'

We know that at some stage of Middle Bengali /h/ between the sequence ɔ—ɔ was lost and in non-initial position ɔ produced ɔ which later became o in modern Calcutta Bengali. Again Middle Bengali sequences ɔe, ia, and ai in non-initial position produced e at a later stage. Because of these changes [ɛ] and [e] began to appear in the same environment. For example

Stage I		Stage II	
/dekhɔe/	[d ɛ khɔe]	/d ɛ khe/	'he sees'
/dekhia/	[dekhia]	/dekhe/	'having seen'
/dekhɔhɔ/	[d ɛ khɔhɔ]	/*dɛ khɔɔ, dɛ khɔ/	'You see'
/dekhihɔ/	[dekhihɔ]	/dekhiɔ/dekho/	'You see (later)'

In describing this particular development Chatterji brings various issues including influence of English but obscures the process of an internal change in the language.

Hoeningwald observes that "replacement change cannot be formulated unless the *Earlier Stage* and the *Later Stage* have each been subjected to synchronic phonemic and grammatical analysis."<sup>16</sup> And this is precisely what Chatterji has not done. In his description of Old Bengali he has tried to reconstruct the early pronunciation mostly on the basis of his interpretation of the language of Carya songs which he has accepted as the earliest extant specimens of Old Bengali. But it has its obvious limitations. The existing manuscript of the Carya songs was written at a much later period than the period of the composition of those songs. While the spellings suggest the coalescence of the sibilants, or the dental and alveolar nasals in the speech of the scribe, they do not tell us much about the actual sound system of the speech of the poets. If the manuscript is accepted as it is then the rimming between dental and alveolar stops (which can suggest evidence of merger of dental and alveolar stops as in Assamese) or between l and ɖ (which might suggest traces of l which contrasts with l in modern Oriya) can throw some light on the phonology of the language in which these lyrics are written. Chatterji has considered the Carya songs as specimens of Old Bengali on evidence of some morphological features. In fact almost every literary historian of Oriya, Assamese and Maithili have also mentioned them as specimens of their respective language. To whatever language we assign these songs, the first thing is to describe the language of the text as minutely as possible without any pre-conceived notion. Any attempt to call the language of the Carya songs either Bengali or Oriya or Assamese or Maithili without describing the language is to oversimplify a very complex situation.

Even a cursory glance at these songs raises doubt about the uniformity of the language. Look at the pronominal system which at once show that

either these songs represent several successive stages of one dialect or they represent different dialects.

Ist Person		II Person	
Nominative	Oblique	Nominative	Oblique
I hāu	—	—	—
II amhe ~ ambhe	—	tumhe	—
III moi ~ moe ~ mɔ	mo—	toi ~ tu	to—

*hāu* is of the lowest frequency in the text. Either it was already an archaic form during the composition of the Caryā songs or it was still in use in one particular dialect ( $D_1$ ) different from another dialect ( $D_2$ ) where *amhe/ambhe* was in use. And *mɔi/moe/mɔ* belonged to another dialect ( $D_3$ ). In the later stage of Bengali, forms of  $D_1$  and  $D_2$  are found in different dialects (i.e., *ami* derived from *amhe/ambhe* and *mui* derived from *mɔi/moe/mɔ* do not occur in the same dialect). This is also true of *tumhe* and *toi/tu*.<sup>17</sup> In case of third person pronoun the picture presents similar possibilities.

I	II	III	
se	so	te	Nominative
—	—	tas—	} Oblique
		tah—/tah	
		ta—	

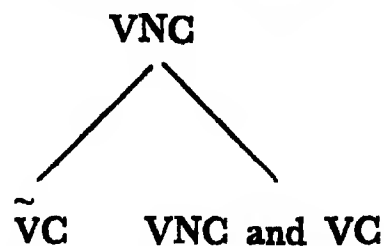
Both *so* and *te* were lost at the next stage (so far as standard Bengali is concerned),<sup>18</sup> the *ta-* remained as the base for oblique pronominals in Bengali. The forms *tas-/tah-/ta-* represent different stages of the original *tasya*. It is, therefore, not easy to consider the Caryā songs as specimens of one particular dialect. It can be further argued that the verb formations, participial constructions and case-markers present very interesting picture and all go against the conclusion that the Caryā songs were written in a particular dialect spoken in a particular area. It can be very well an artificial poetic style. But I do not want to argue on that point in this paper. My present point is to emphasize the linguistic anomalies of the text and that any arbitrary conclusion will not help us to understand the nature of the language of the Caryā songs.

Similarly in Shri Krishna Kirtan, which has been accepted by Chatterji and by later historians of Bengali as the specimen of Early Middle Bengali one notices at least two stages of one dialect.

	Shri Krishna Kirtan		Modern Calcutta dialect	
	Stage I	Stage II		
A.	barɔɔ dhɔɔɔɔ	barɔ dhɔɔ	baro dhoro	'twelve' 'keep (it)'
B.	bɔhɔe jhɔɔe	bɔhe jhɔre	bɔé jhɔre	'(he) carries' '(it) drips'
C.	kɔɔ chahɔ	kori cahi	kori cai	'I do' 'I look'
D.	hɔite	hote	hote	'from'

These four groups of examples in the second column in Shri Krishna Kirtan show loss of medial -h-, replacement of -ɔe by -e, replacement of personal inflection -ɔ by -i, and loss of -i- in a sequence of -ɔ i-. And the forms in the second column are closer to Modern Bengali. This is enough to show that this manuscript contains specimens of at least two different stages of the growth of Bengali and the stages must be identified and the data should be arranged accordingly. It is not suggested that Chatterji is unaware of this problem but only that he does not present the history of the growth of Middle Bengali and its subsequent changes with greater rigour which demands a systematisation of his data.

Chatterji uses considerable data from various dialects which are indeed of great value. But he does not give a comprehensive description of the various dialects. Had he concentrated on the emergence of one particular dialect (for example the standard colloquial) he could have avoided the descriptions of other dialects. But he often digresses from his main issue and talks about other dialects as well. In spite of our very meagre information about the Middle Bengali dialects and mutilated manuscripts it is possible to reconstruct the earlier stages of various dialects. Since it is important to know the different kinds of development in different dialects it is desirable to treat them separately. Let us take the case of the development of nasal vowels. The Middle Indo-Aryan sequence of a vowel-nasal consonant-consonant (VNC) had undergone changes in Bengali in two ways:



In some of the dialects the V was nasalised which began to contrast with oral vowels, and the N was lost. In some other dialects the N was retained

for some period and then lost and thus created divergence between the dialects.<sup>19</sup>

Chatterji's attempt to show the changes of Old Indo-Aryan grammatical system into New Indo-Aryan often prevents him to show the development of the grammatical system within Bengali. For example, he has classified the Bengali verb roots into primary and secondary roots. His analysis is of course useful for those interested in knowing the changes that the Old Indo-Aryan roots underwent in later stages. But for the development of Bengali, information whether several roots were originally causatives in Old Indo-Aryan, is of little importance, since Bengali inherited them from a proto-language where they ceased to be causatives. Similarly whether certain roots can be traced up to the primary roots of Classical Sanskrit or Vedic or whether they were originally prefixed roots are hardly helpful in understanding the history of the growth of Bengali. The information of roots directly borrowed from Sanskrit properly belongs to the external history of the language, and unless such borrowings did affect the internal structure of Bengali—which they hardly did—as all examples given by Chatterji are restricted to a particular style of writing and only a few appear in speech—it is of very little historical significance.

These comments will suffice to point out the inadequacy of Chatterji's very valuable work. I have tried to show that he collected immense data but his handling is not satisfactory. Instead of giving a synchronic description of each stage of Bengali and then correlating the stages, he treats the history of individual elements of the language. He does not demarcate clearly the different stages of Bengali in terms of significant innovations in the language. And he often fails to distinguish between the changes which are significant and which are not. These comments are not necessarily to be viewed as an attempt to belittle the contribution of Chatterji. This book was written about fifty years ago and linguistic science has made a tremendous progress during this half-century. The tools of linguistic analysis have become more sophisticated and new models of linguistic descriptions have been created. Several models are now outmoded and several others are under fire. Chatterji's book was fresh and modern in 1926.

#### IV

*The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* inspired many scholars in other parts of India to write histories of languages.<sup>20</sup> But not a single significant scholarly work on the history of the Bengali language has been written since 1926. Sukumar Sen's *Bhashar Itibritta* (Calcutta, 1953) and Muhammad Shahidullah's *Bangala Bhashar Itibritta* (Dacca, 1968)<sup>21</sup> are

pedagogical in their approach and are intended to be used as text books. Sen's book contains a general introduction to phonetics, semantics, descriptions of sound change and definitions of various terms and a brief account of Indo-European language family, a sketchy outline of the Vedic and Prakrit etc. His scheme of the historical development of Bengali follows more or less closely Chatterji's. Shahidullah's book has a greater unity of design and he has examined the various opinions regarding the origin Bengali and has put forward his own views though not with much evidence and arguments, and has tried to show the influence of the Munda languages on Bengali. Otherwise this book, too, follows the traditional pattern. It is not necessary to go into the details of these two books (both enjoyed great popularity among the students, one in West Bengal and the other in East Bengal) since both are unsatisfactory in their designs, archaic in their methods and written in a pedestrian style. Few more books have been published during the recent years to meet the need of the increasing number of students studying Bengali at post-graduate level who are obliged to take a course on the history of Bengali.<sup>22</sup> These books give the impression that linguistic researches came to a sudden halt in the early thirties. The writer of a text book is expected to be interested in exposing the student to ways of looking at a language and to make him familiar with the latest tools and techniques. Most of these books betray very clearly the ignorance of their authors of the latest developments in historical linguistics.

Like the history of a nation, a comprehensive and scientific history of a language—both external and internal—possibly cannot be written by a single individual. Even when one scholar undertakes such a vast task he has to depend on the labours of a large number of scholars in the field. Very little work has been done in the field of Bengali dialectology. If the data of earlier stages of our dialects are available they can be of immense help to the study of diachronic studies. Since such materials are not available till now, the dialect study has to be diatopic,<sup>23</sup> i.e., an approach involving topographical factors has to be seriously considered. The study of dialects can be of great help in refining as well as enlarging our knowledge of the external history of the language, and also, as pointed out by McIntosh, the regional differences in dialect observed in a diatopic approach will naturally lead us "to investigate any possible historical causes, both of a linguistic and non-linguistic kind, and which might explain these differences".<sup>24</sup> Without a detailed study of the various dialects, one cannot possibly think of a comprehensive history of Bengali.

Secondly, the question of the origin of Bengali needs fresh examination. The existing view, postulated by Grierson and others, is that Bengali emerged from the Magadhi Apabhramsa which is a later form of Magadhi Prakrit.

Shahidullah objected to it on the ground that though Old Indo-Aryan /r/ has been replaced by /l/ in Magadhi both are separate phonemes in Bengali. Old Indo-Aryan /j/ has been replaced by /y/ in Magadhi while that feature is absent in Bengali. Keith also thought it was difficult to prove traces of Magadhi in Bengali with any cogency.<sup>23</sup> Shahidullah suggests that it will be wrong to assign any particular Prakrit as the parent language of Bengali, rather a proto-stage has to be reconstructed.

Thirdly, available manuscripts, including the Carya songs, have to be edited on an *ad hoc* basis, i.e., each linguistic element must be described only on the basis of its relationship to other elements in the same text. Mukherji's account of the language of the Carya Text is one of the first ventures in this direction.<sup>24</sup> A rigorous description of the languages of both Carya songs and of Shri Krishna Kirtan is the first requisite for the study of Old and Middle Bengali.

This review of Bengali linguistic historiography shows one thing very clearly that historians of the Bengali language have failed to keep pace with the tremendous speed of development in linguistic researches in Europe and in America. The state of perfection, like the horizon of the earth, recedes farther as one approaches near it. Therefore, it is high time that scholars in this field must shed their complacency and start this important work afresh. A restatement of Chatterji's book can be a good start. That can at least set an example of sophisticated approach in respect of methodology in historical linguistics before the students to enable them to distinguish the amateurish and irresponsible writings from serious works. Otherwise such adulterated scholarship will continue to thrive in our academic life.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Jespersen, Otto., *Language, its Nature, Development and Origin*, London, 1922; Reprinted 1950, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Lehmann, W. P., *Historical Linguistics*, New York, 1964, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Bloomfield, L., *Language*, New York, 1933; Reprint, London, 1962, pp. 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> He considered these seven languages only: Hindi, Panjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya and Bengali.

<sup>5</sup> Published in the *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* (Bombay), Vols. XVI-XVII. Reprinted as a book in 1924 and later from Bhandarkar Research Institute, Poona, 1929.

<sup>6</sup> 'Bangabhashar Utpatti', *Bibidhartha Samgraha*, V, 49, 1856.

<sup>7</sup> Review of Yates' *Introduction to the Bengali Language* in *Calcutta Review* Vol. XI, 1849.

<sup>8</sup> See, Mahendranath Chattopadhyay, *Bangabhashar Itihas* (1871), Ramgati Nyayratna, *Bangala Bhasha Sahitya Bishayak Prastab* (1873), Rajnarayan Basu, *Bangala Bhasha O Sahitya Bishayak Baktrita* (1878), Padmanath Ghoshal and Abinash Chandra Mukhopadhyay, *Gauriya Bhasha Tattva* (1875).

<sup>9</sup> 'On the Philology of the Bengali Language', *Mookerjee's Magazine*, November, 1872.

<sup>10</sup> *Bangala Bhasha*, Bangadarshan, (Jaistha, 1285 B.E.), May-June, 1878.

<sup>11</sup> Majumdar, *The History of the Bengali Language*, Calcutta, 1920, p. v.

<sup>12</sup> Majumdar criticises A. H. Keane's view that there is no such phenomenon as linguistic miscegenation. He thinks certain elements 'foreign to our language' can be recognized as miscegenation. *Ibid.*, p. 10.



<sup>13</sup> De Saussure, Ferdinand., *Course in General Linguistics*, Translated from French by Wade Baskin, London, 1959, pp. 22-3.

<sup>14</sup> It is understandable why Chatterji had to talk about the external history of Bengali in this book. The external history of Bengali was hardly well-known. While Thomas Pylos can afford to restrict discussion on external history to a minimum (*The Origins and Development of the English Language*, New York, 1971) Chatterji did not have that privilege in 1926.

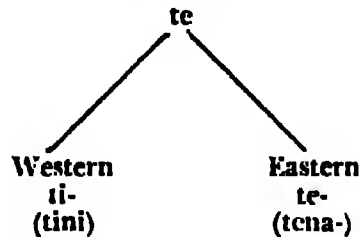
<sup>15</sup> Later historian Mahammad Shahidullah who posited a stage of proto-Assamese-Bengali-Oriya is completely silent about the history of the split of the languages. See *Bangala Bhashar Itibritta*, Dacca, 1968, pp. 39-42.

<sup>16</sup> Hoeningswald, Henry, M., *Language Change and Linguistic Reconstruction*, The University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 3.

In all fairness, it must be admitted that the phonemic analysis did not emerge as a linguistic tool when Chatterji wrote his book. However, it is surprising that Chatterji did not make any significant modification in his analysis when this book was reprinted in 1971 with an additional volume.

<sup>17</sup> In Bengali *ami* and *mui* represented two different dialects: standard and non-standard. But *tumi* and *tni* became part of the same dialect, the former being a higher form of address. It is not unlikely that *ami* and *mui* at an earlier stage represented a hierarchy of address (i.e., *ami* being more respectable and *mui* being humble) within one dialect.

<sup>18</sup> It is quite possible that *te* developed into *ti-* in some dialects as evidenced by the honorific forms of Bengali third personal pronouns.



<sup>19</sup> Shri Krishna Kirtan attests both types of changes: *rāḍ* and *cand* (<candra 'moon'). *gāḥ* and *ganḥ* (<granth- 'to glean'). Several East Bengali dialects retain -N- e.g. *kand* as opposed to Calcutta Bengali *kāḍ* (<krand- 'to weep'), or do not show any trace of the earlier -N- e.g. *dat* as opposed to Calcutta Bengali *dāt* (<danta 'tooth').

<sup>20</sup> See Subhadra Jha, *The Formation of the Maithili Language*, London, 1958; Uday Narain Tiwari, *The Origin and Development of Bhojpur*, Calcutta, 1950; Banikanta Kakati, *Assamese, Its formation and Development*, Gauhati, 1941, 2nd ed., 1962.

<sup>21</sup> Shahidullah wrote a paper entitled An Historical Grammar of the Bengali Language in the *Journal of the Department of Letters*, University of Calcutta, 1920. He delivered a few lectures at Dacca University in 1941 which were published later in *Sahitya Patrika* in 1960. Results of his labours in this field were finally included in this book which was first published in 1965.

<sup>22</sup> Murari Mohan Sen, *Bhashar Itihas*, 2 Vols., 1969; Krishnapada Goswami, *Bangala Bhasha Tattva Itihas*, 1966; Ananda Mohan Basu, *Bangla Bhashar Itihas*, 1973. The title of Goswami's book is confusing since it means 'the history of Bengali Linguistics' though the author intends to write a history of the Bengali Language.

<sup>23</sup> McIntosh, A., *An Introduction to a Survey of Scottish Dialects*, University of Edinburgh, 1961, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> Keith, A. B., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford, 1928, p. 35. See also Shahidullah, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>26</sup> Mukherji, T., *The Old Bengali Language and Text*, Calcutta University, 1963.

# Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and the Education of Bengal

ASOK SEN

## I

### LEARNING AND RESPECTABILITY

ISWAR Chandra first came to Calcutta in 1828. In the same year the city received William Bentinck as the new Governor-General, who distinguished himself for his idea of development based "on the belief in the limitless possibilities of mankind as 'civilised Europe' with its factories and its two Chamber Parliaments, its newspapers and its scientific academies first disclosed them".<sup>1</sup> All his means<sup>2</sup> to attain that goal in the economic sphere—indigo 'as a centre of a circle of development', the Gloucester mills, the collieries and other modern enterprises under the aegis of British capital—were aborted in course of less than a decade. And the roads and steamers, which had called forth so much of Bentinck's zeal and initiative, came to absorb the country more effectively in the colonial nexus of trade and exploitation, by providing new facilities for a pattern of sales and purchases beneficial to the British imperial economy.

However, Bentinck's policy on education found the circumstances more propitious to carry out the mission of 'civilized Europe'. His resolution of 1835, assigned supreme and almost exclusive priority for English learning. As is well known, the new policy derived its premises from the evidence of native craving to learn English and was tuned to the object<sup>3</sup> of forming a class of 'interpreters' between the rulers and the ruled. Its makers and spokesmen went by the sole experience of Calcutta, where a perfect accord had been emerging between the British and Indian leaders, as regards necessity for English as the medium of education.

This was expected since the rich and leading Bengali families in Calcutta, owed their wealth and success to the rise of the British power.

They attained prosperity in the activities of trading middlemen, money-lenders, and landlords, and, as an English observer commented, "under our sovereignty, chiefly in our service, and entirely through our protection".<sup>4</sup> Further, "It is in Calcutta that the effect of the intercourse between the Europeans and natives is in any degree visible, as there alone an indistinct sort of link may be discovered between the rulers and the people".<sup>5</sup> Let us then have a look at what was visible in the sphere of social intercourse, and led, together with the causes enumerated above, to ensure that "the English language itself has thus become not only of *material* advantage, but it is *fashionable* in the Indian Metropolis; a native gentleman does not like to confess his ignorance of it; it seems as if he would lose caste in the eyes of an Englishman of high rank by addressing him in Bengali".<sup>6</sup>

Describing a party "given by Rammohan Roy, a rich Bengalee baboo",<sup>7</sup> Fanny Parkes wrote in 1823, of the excellent fireworks, of the *nach* girls who were dancing and singing, and "included among them" Nickec, the Catalani of the East, and also of Indian jugglery which was introduced after supper. She noted that the house was handsomely furnished and "everything in European style, with the exception of the owner".<sup>8</sup> Let us describe another ceremony in the same year "at the house of a wealthy Baboo during the festival of the Doorga Puja or Dasera", where, "In the rooms on one side . . . a handsome supper was laid out, in the European style, supplied by Messrs. Gunter and Harper, where ices and French wines were in plenty for the European guests. In the rooms on the other sides . . . were groups of *nach* girls dancing and singing, and crowds of European and native gentlemen sitting on sofas or on chairs listening to Hindoostanee airs".<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in their world of leisure and recreation, the rich Bengalis were taking to new styles of sociability, pandering to the tastes and preferences of their sovereign benefactors. Their motives and ambitions did not lack a sense of competition, though entirely on its own limited and loyal terms, and also quite frustrating in its total import. For example, in the winter races of 1836 in Calcutta, "A cup of silver, given by a rich Bengalee, Dwarakanath Tagore, was run for: the cup was elaborately worked, and the workmanship good; but the design was in the excess of bad taste, and such as only a Baboo would have approved".<sup>10</sup> There was perhaps a curious coincidence in the winning of this cup by a horse named 'Absentee'. Let me not be criticised however for ignoring the logical maxim that proper names, whether of men or of lower animals, may have no connotation. But a strange logic was really working itself out in our history of those days.

These are only a few of the numerous examples one can discover from the various narratives. Already, there were signs of a sober reaction as well, which indicated the level of learning and communication attained by the

rich men of Calcutta. In its issue of 12th November, 1826, the *Calcutta Gazette* severely criticised<sup>11</sup> the practice of native gentlemen to cater "for the grosser entertainment of European guests" and for "throwing their doors open to a promiscuous mob". Further, it emphasized that those Bengalis "are far from being deficient either in intelligence, or information, or command of the English language, requisite to a free and friendly intercourse with their guests at a more propitious season and under more favourable circumstances".<sup>12</sup>

Certainly, Rammohan and Dwarkanath were among those who had espoused the cause of achieving 'more propitious' and 'more favourable' circumstances. The examples, we have cited above, were germane to the milieu in which such efforts were conducted. No wonder that in this background, Bentinck and Macaulay saw perfect accord between their policy and the aspirations of their subjects. Already the rich citizens of Calcutta had come forward to set up English schools and colleges in the city. They were also active in the good work done by organisations like the Calcutta School Society and the Calcutta School Book Society. Their ideals of education were evident in the establishment of Hindu College in 1817 and even more explicitly in the remonstrance of Rammohan Roy against the foundation of the Sanskrit College in 1824.<sup>13</sup>

And so when the new policy on education was pushed to gain in pace neither the long-term imperial perspective, nor its immediate exigencies had concern over the other kind of evidence submitted by William Adam in his reports<sup>14</sup> on the state of things prevailing outside the domain of Anglo-Indian accord in Calcutta: "I cannot however expect that the reading of the report should convey the impressions which I have received from daily witnessing the mere animal life to which ignorance consigns its victims, unconscious of any wants or enjoyments beyond those which they participate with the beasts of the field—unconscious of any of the higher purposes for which existence has been bestowed, society has been constituted, and government is exercised".<sup>15</sup> Macaulay remarked that Adam was referring to an evil "which time alone can remedy".<sup>16</sup> Sticking to the position of diffusing wider information and better sentiments among upper and middle classes, Auckland, the then Governor-General, declared "that the hope of acting immediately and powerfully on the mass of the poor peasantry in India is certainly far from being strong for me".<sup>17</sup>

Adam set his focus on conditions in rural Bengal, where lived the vast majority of the people. Iswar Chandra was born in a rural Brahmin family of traditional *pandits*. Though not a part of the poor peasantry, it had long experience of grinding poverty far away from the riches and splendour of new Calcutta. What we know from Iswar Chandra's own description<sup>18</sup> of

Ramjoy Tarkabhusan, his grandfather, gives us the portrait of a man akin to that ideal type of Sanskrit scholars observed by Adam: "The humbleness and simplicity of their characters, their dwellings and their apparel, forcibly contrast with the extent of their acquirements and the refinement of their feelings . . . I saw men not only unpretending, but plain and simple in their manners and though seldom, if ever, offensively coarse, yet reminding me of the very humblest classes of English and Scottish peasantry; . . ."<sup>19</sup>

Ramjoy's unconcern for material comfort and his determination not to yield to selfish and overbearing relatives, impelled him to go on pilgrimage for long periods. His wife had to earn a livelihood for herself and her children, by working on a spinning-wheel (*charka*) and selling the yarn to weavers in neighbouring Khirpai, then a large centre of crafts and trade.<sup>20</sup> Such extreme poverty forced Thakurdas, Iswar Chandra's father, to go to Calcutta at an early age, and work as a low-placed clerk in a business house, after acquiring a little knowledge of English from perfunctory sources.<sup>21</sup>

Iswar Chandra had his early education in an elementary school of Birsingha. The teacher thought highly of Iswar's talents and advised his father to place the boy in a good English school in Calcutta. At that time, Thakurdas had a paltry income of ten rupees per month. Despite his wishes, it was practically impossible for Thakurdas to admit his son to the Hindu College, which would require the payment of a monthly fee of five rupees.<sup>22</sup> He was advised by friends to try for Iswar's admission to the free school of David Hare. If it was seriously pursued, Iswar Chandra might have had to run after Hare's palanquin, as Rantanu Lahiri had done a few years ago.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps, it was not practicable because Iswar Chandra, then a boy of eight, could not conceivably go for an ordeal which Rantanu had passed through at the age of thirteen.

After a few months of indecision, then, Iswar Chandra was placed in the Sanskrit College in June, 1829. This institution was known to have a sound system of learning and several careers were open to its successful students. No fees were charged from the students.<sup>24</sup> Thakurdas could then engage himself in cherishing happy thoughts on the future of his son, when Iswar Chandra might become a teacher in a *tol* or *chatuspathi* of his own.<sup>25</sup> It would as well be a return to the traditional family activity which Thakurdas failed to pursue for reasons of poverty and distress.

Thus initially, Iswar Chandra did not enjoy the means and advantage to secure admission to the Hindu College, where "Young men from the best families of the city attended . . . in great numbers, attracted not by the hope of stipends, of which there were very few, but by the more laudable ambition of increasing their social respectability, and, in some cases, we may venture to suppose, by a pure love of knowledge".<sup>26</sup> The nature of

difficulties reveals to us the narrow bias of the calculations made some years later by Macaulay and Trevelyan, when they propounded the new education policy. My object, of course, is not to deny that to some extent at least, in due course, the policy of 1835 made English education more accessible to poorer aspirants of new careers and social respectability under British rule. However, it is significant that not being one from 'the best families of the city', Iswar Chandra had his place among those whom Trevelyan categorised as 'hired'<sup>27</sup> pupils in his assessment of priorities of education for the country.

Iswar Chandra read in the Sanskrit College till he was twentyone and progressed into a scholar of great repute. He had an excellent record of wonderful proficiency in all the branches of Sanskrit learning including grammar, literature, rhetoric, logic and philosophy. Equally admirable were the original qualities of his mind and perception as revealed in the essays and verses he had written even during his student days. Further, Iswar Chandra passed the Law Committee Examination when he was only seventeen. His merit was no less pronounced in the optional learning of English, which Iswar Chandra could then study only for a few years before the closure of English teaching in the Sanskrit College in 1835. Indeed, the excellence of this young scholar reached legendary heights, widely and unexceptionably acknowledged by his teachers, and thus Iswar Chandra came to be acclaimed as Vidyasagar when he was still a student.<sup>28</sup>

For Iswar Chandra, such scholarly eminence was not merely a matter of devotion to learning; it was a continuous struggle against extremely adverse circumstances of poverty and distress. Iswar Chandra bore all that hardship with courage and determination, as he had been growing up from boyhood to youth, from the anonymity of a poor village boy to the eminence of Vidyasagar. Amidst all this, he would find the time and the mind again to help the poor and the distressed. This is how a large part of the money from his scholarships was spent. The onerous load of household work never did deter him from spending sleepless nights for the nursing and succour of helpless cholera patients. And for Thakurdas, he never failed to do all that could be expected from the eldest son of a poor and encumbered father. Thakurdas, in his turn, thought of buying little bits of land with the money received from Iswar Chandra's scholarships, hoping that their rental would be used eventually for the maintenance of students in a *tol* or *chatuspathi* to be set up by his learned son.<sup>29</sup>

The ambition of Thakurdas proved to be too limited. Vidyasagar became an educator of his fellow men on a scale immensely larger and more significant than that of a small *tol* or *chatuspathi*. At the level of fame and earning his son had reached Thakurdas could certainly have no grievance over this course of development. From 1841 to 1858, Vidyasagar served in several

government institutions on a monthly salary ranging from Rs. 50 to Rs. 500 in various capacities such as Head Pandit or Seristadar of the Fort William College, the Assistant Secretary of the Sanskrit College, Head Writer and Treasurer of the Fort William College, Professor and later the Principal of the Sanskrit College and at last Assistant Inspector of Schools in the districts of Burdwan, Nadia, Hooghly and Midnapore. While working at his first post of the Head Pandit in the Fort William College, Vidyasagar acquired a sound knowledge of English and Hindi, whereby he was fully equipped to act in the role of an 'interpreter' between the ruler and the ruled, a role about which Macaulay was so explicit in his statement on the future of English education in India.

Thus, Ishwar Chandra, once a poor village boy, grew up into a man of great qualities and distinction. He had no birthright of social respectability in metropolitan Calcutta. Notwithstanding his uncommon talents and aptitude for learning, Ishwar Chandra was deprived of his stipend during the period when the amount of such grants to the Sanskrit College was reduced by more than 50 per cent between 1835 and 1841.<sup>30</sup> It may be recalled that seventy student petitioners of the Sanskrit College, prayed to Auckland in 1836 for a renewal of their stipends.<sup>31</sup> Obviously then there were obstacles even to his pursuit of learning, which Ishwar Chandra had to overcome through his own extraordinary merit, unceasing labour and discipline of hardship. All of this must have determined much of his future ability to combine an enormous courage with readiness of will, his ideal of social service with limitless compassion for human suffering.

What was not his birthright accrued to Ishwar Chandra as his achievement. His glorious record of learning opened up the doors to social respectability. For his society, it was the period of a new beginning spurred at one level by the appeal of enlightenment through western learning. A large premium on the knowledge of English, the language of the foreign rulers, was the consequence. But the knowledge of English had its other, and even more determining attraction of being the necessary means to obtain riches and respectability under British rule. And so, in this context of history, the wages of respectability had to be paid in an acceptance and conformity which would put the two aims of learning in a critical contradiction. Between social respectability and social progress fell the dark shadow of the overpowering British empire and its effects on the entire economy and society of the country.

Again, to envisage the creative extent of his life-tasks, Vidyasagar chose an identity and its prospect inside the same sequence of transition. Inevitably, his choice was also entangled in the incongruity of the ends of enlightenment to the social means available for their attainment. Such were the contraries



that detached learned respectability from the roots of social progress in nineteenth century Bengal. And, for a man of Vidyasagar's strength and humanity, it was never a regression due to any innate weakness of will or conscience but a futility arising from the incoherence of the elements of identity which his society offered him as a man of learning and respectability. The nature of that identity, its endeavours and its defeats, will be revealed to us as we shall take a fuller account of what Vidyasagar wanted to do for the education of his countrymen.

## II

### EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

A learned man of humble rural origin, Vidyasagar had his own ideas on the needs of education for his people. The ideas reflected his sound 'acquirement' of traditional learning, and even more remarkably, his own perception of conflicts between the old and the new in the transition which was taking place. During the thirties of the last century when Iswar Chandra was a student of Sanskrit College, Calcutta went through the experience of statutory abolition of *sati* and of reactions leading to the formation of the *Dharmasabha*; of the craze among a section of the English educated youth to embrace Christianity; and of the panic and tension roused by the threat of the 'Young Bengal' to break away from traditional customs and restrictions.<sup>32</sup>

The roots of the conflict were perhaps evident to Iswar Chandra in the contrasts he must have witnessed between the Sanskrit College, his own place of learning with its ensemble of poorer students and traditional orientation of studies, and the neighbouring Hindu College which was attended by young men from affluent families and turned into the centre of new learning that made some students critically aware of the incoherence of their religious and social living. It was this learning and the iconoclasm evoked among the first generation of students, that impelled a few sons to go against their fathers, and to believe that "a father's cries are not stronger than those of truth".<sup>33</sup>

For Vidyasagar, the break up of old dogmas and the acceptance of new ideas never came to conflict with his lifelong love and veneration for his parents. His courage and independence, and no less his strength of rationality, which was almost unique among his contemporaries, were invariably involved in more impersonal issues and means of social articulation. The early years of his work at the Fort William College were filled with hard labour, rigid discipline, and acquisition of new knowledge through the opportunity of com-



ing in close contact with English scholars and administrators. Then followed his appointment in 1846 to the post of Assistant Secretary in the Sanskrit College, which lasted however for fifteen months only, since Vidyasagar resigned from this job due to his experience of not finding "those opportunities of being useful in anticipation of which"<sup>34</sup> he had applied for the appointment.

Vidyasagar expected to carry out a plan of reforms in the Sanskrit College. The changes which he proposed regarding the content of studies, rephrasing of the curriculum and the methods of teaching, were aimed at "facilitating the acquirement of the largest store of sound Sanskrit and English learning combined . . . to produce men who will be highly useful in the work of imbuing our Vernacular dialects with the Science and civilization of the Western world".<sup>35</sup> But Rasamoy Dutt, the Secretary of the Sanskrit College, suppressed the plan without due consideration of its merits. Vidyasagar resigned in protest and wrote to the Secretary that failing to effect reforms, "the Institution will not fully answer its two purposes namely of imparting Sanskrit literature primarily and of teaching English secondarily".<sup>36</sup> Further, he was critical of the failure of the Secretary to redress the inconvenience caused to the students of the Sanskrit College as and when the Principal of the Hindu College assumed the privilege "to take occasionally a portion of the stools and desks of the Sanskrit College for the accommodation of his own students at a particular examination for 3 or 4 days together".<sup>37</sup>

But for his fearless sense of dignity and independence, Vidyasagar could hardly afford to resign from his post in the Sanskrit College. There were twenty dependants in his Calcutta household, mostly poorer relations and friends, and a remittance each month was regularly due to his parents at Birsingha. The only other earner in the family was Dinabandhu, his younger brother who had been absorbed, at Vidyasagar's request, in his former post at the Fort William College. After accepting Vidyasagar's resignation, Rasamoy Dutt commented to some acquaintances: "How will Vidyasagar earn his living?" Vidyasagar's reaction was entirely nonchalant: he remarked: "Tell Rasamoy Babu that Vidyasagar will live by selling vegetables".<sup>38</sup>

Vidyasagar had already applied his mind and energy to the free enterprise of printing and publishing books.<sup>39</sup> The initial capital of six hundred rupees was raised with a loan from a close friend of Vidyasagar. And then in equal partnership with Madanmohan Tarkalankar, his friend and colleague at the Sanskrit College, Vidyasagar set up the 'Sanskrit Press and Depository'—printers, publishers and stockists—which started off in business by publishing an edition of Bharat Chandra's *Annadāmangal* and Vidyasagar's

*Betal Panchabimshati*, with encouragement from Major Marshall, the Secretary of the Fort William College and Vidyasagar's consistent friend and benefactor, who purchased one hundred copies of each book for his students. Vidyasagar showed remarkable ingenuity for devising improvement of Bengali types and their mode of setting by compositors. Indeed, his endless creativity as a writer together with his efficiency in the book business gave Vidyasagar the freedom he required for his lifelong struggle to reform education and society. The independence of his mind and activity was never constrained by the problem of livelihood.

At the request of Mouat, the then Secretary of the Council of Education, Vidyasagar joined the Sanskrit College for the second time as Professor of Literature, in December, 1850. Committing himself to the object of reforms, which had been aborted on the previous occasion, Vidyasagar accepted the new job, on a definite understanding that he would soon be given the authority of Principal of the college. Shortly after his appointment, Vidyasagar was assigned the responsibility of framing a report on the working of the Sanskrit College. Together with his report, Vidyasagar put forward a total plan for remodelling the various branches of studies, based on his aim to render a more useful and practical bent to the entire course of learning. The plan amounted to a mature and more comprehensive formulation of the proposals which Vidyasagar had submitted in 1847.<sup>40</sup>

The Sanskrit College was then passing through a severe crisis and the Education Council apprehended that the institution might have to be abolished altogether. The number of students had been falling off mainly due to the paucity of worldly prospects before the scholars passing from the Sanskrit College. The report which had been called from Vidyasagar was intended to explore whether any measures could be devised to save the Sanskrit College from complete dissolution. Encouraged by Vidyasagar's plan, the Education Council proposed that the post of Principal should be created by abolishing the offices of Secretary and Assistant Secretary. They further recommended to Government that Vidyasagar was by far the fittest person for the office of Principal. The task of reorganisation was made easier by the resignation of Rasamoy Dutt. And then for a period of seven years from 1851, working as Principal of the Sanskrit College, Vidyasagar achieved some far-reaching improvements in the standards and performance of that institution.

The bold perspective of Vidyasagar's plan of reforms was further revealed in a document prepared by him as 'Notes on the Sanskrit College'.<sup>41</sup> It focussed on the supreme importance of creating an enlightened Bengali literature and on the responsibility of good Sanskrit scholars to evolve an elegant, expressive and idiomatic Bengali style. The same role would remain unrealised unless the students combined their sound learning of Sanskrit

with that of English language and literature and of "three branches in English, namely, History, Mathematics and Natural Philosophy". Further, Moral and Mental Philosophy, Logic, and Political Economy should be included in the course for the Senior Scholarship Examination, one of them being selected in turn for every succeeding year.

As regards the continuance of the study of the major systems of Hindu Philosophy, Vidyasagar's ideas broke away in the realm of rational predilections from uncritical acceptance of age-old metaphysics:

"True it is that the most part of the Hindu systems of philosophy do not tally with the advanced ideas of modern times, yet it is undeniable that to a good Sanskrit scholar their knowledge is absolutely required. By the time the students come to the Darshana or Philosophy class, their acquirement in English will enable them to study the modern Philosophy of Europe. . . . Young men thus educated will be better able to expose the errors of ancient Hindu Philosophy than if they were to derive their knowledge of Philosophy simply from European sources."<sup>43</sup>

Moreover,

"Another advantage is that students so prepared, wishing to transfer the philosophy of the West into a native dress will possess a stock of technical words already in some degree familiar to intelligent natives."<sup>43</sup>

Again, a year later, the strength of his rational mind was expressed in Vidyasagar's reactions to a report made to the Education Council by Dr. Ballantyne, Principal of the Benares Government College, who had come on an official visit to the Sanskrit College in Calcutta. While appreciating the combination of English and Sanskrit courses, Ballantyne felt the need for safeguards to obviate "the danger that the two courses may end in persuading the learner that 'truth is double!' He specifically suggested the inclusion of Bishop Berkeley's *Inquiry* in the curriculum, and wrote of the general need "to train up a body of men qualified to understand both the learned of India and the learned of Europe, and to interpret between the two, removing unnecessary prejudice by pointing out real agreement where there was seeming discordance and conciliating acceptance for the advancing science of Europe by showing that European science recognises all those elementary truths that had been reached by Hindu speculation".<sup>44</sup>

Vidyasagar wrote to the Education Council:

"That the Vedanta and Sankhya are false systems of philosophy is no more a matter of dispute. These systems, false as they are, command unbound reverence

from the Hindus. While teaching these in the Sanskrit course, we should oppose them by sound philosophy in the English course to counteract their influence. Bishop Berkeley's *Inquiry*, which has arrived at similar or identical conclusions with the Vedanta or Sankhya and which is no more considered in Europe as a sound system of philosophy, will not serve the purpose."<sup>45</sup>

Further, he explicitly stated,

"It is not possible in all cases, I fear, that we shall be able to show real agreement between European science and Hindu Shastras."<sup>46</sup>

And, instead of attempting the impossible task of completely conciliating the learned of India to the reception of scientific truths,

"What we require is to extend the benefit of education to the mass of the people. Let us establish a number of vernacular schools, let us propose a series of vernacular class-books on useful and instructive subjects, let us raise up a band of men qualified to undertake the responsible duty of teachers and the object is accomplished."<sup>47</sup>

And Vidyasagar himself carried out a big plan of text-books for Sanskrit and Bengali education. He wrote and published a series of books for students from the first primer to higher standards.<sup>48</sup> There were *R̥jupāṭha* (an edited Sanskrit reader in three parts), *Upakramanikā* and *Vyākaraṇ Kaumudī* in three parts, intended to realise Vidyasagar's new and simplified approach to the study of Sanskrit grammar, the books which were of great help to students. In Bengali text-books such as *Bodhodaya* and *Jīvan-Charit*, he endeavoured to initiate young minds to the rudiments of scientific knowledge and essentials of rational thinking. Moreover, the text-books were even more significant for their role in the formation of modern Bengali prose. These were the primers where Vidyasagar spelled out the elements to be used for shaping the language to an order and a system to endow it with clear meaning and correct form. The true Bengali prose had come to its own in the four major literary works of Vidyasagar, viz., *Betal Pañchabīnshatī*, *Shakuntalā* (based on the famous Sanskrit play by Kālidāsa), *Sitār Vanabās* (based on *Uttar-rāmcharita* by Bhavabhūti), and *Bhrāntivilās* (based on Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*). Vidyasagar borrowed from Sanskrit and English what could be harmoniously blended with Bengali and all that was necessary to strengthen and clarify its native genius. Close to common life, his language was colloquial, and at the same time refined and elegant, lucid and precise,

and yet colourful and musical. And "Now a new harmony, 'the other harmony of prose', was born in our language."<sup>49</sup>

Both in his ideas on education and in the style and content of his books, Vidyasagar revealed his capacity to build anew from the bases of traditional learning. Add to them his resolute move to admit students of the *Kayastha* caste to the Sanskrit College,<sup>50</sup> and his ruling that the college would remain closed on Sundays and not, as before, according to the restrictions of the Hindu almanac,<sup>51</sup> and we obtain the image of an educator with wholesome support for the non-orthodox system of learning that had already begun to prevail in the sphere of English education. What made the position of Vidyasagar even more significant was his concern for the reception of modern knowledge and rational thought through the medium of Bengali, the language of his own people. While appreciating the rational content of western learning and its usefulness, Vidyasagar realized that for wider impact, the same knowledge would have to spread beyond the limits of the Anglicised system of education. Indeed, such an awareness acted as the source of the reforms he introduced in the Sanskrit College, and of his aim to develop the Bengali language into a vehicle suitable for the communication of western knowledge.

The same objective influenced Vidyasagar to work for the building and improvement of Bengali schools and also for the spread of female education. As early as 1853, he established a free school in his native village of Birsingha and added very soon an evening and a girls' section to the same. Halliday, a member of the Education Council and subsequently the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, submitted a Minute<sup>52</sup> on the subject of elementary education. Vidyasagar's 'Note on Vernacular Education'<sup>53</sup> furnished Halliday with the main ideas of his Minute and worked out a concrete outline of the subjects, books, schemes of teacher training and system of supervision for vernacular education. Much of this Minute would recall to our mind the principles and recommendations Adam had put forward in his Reports of 1835-38, which obtained no priority in the policies of Bentinck, Macaulay and Auckland.

In their policies it was deemed more desirable to concentrate on instruction in English for the higher classes. The matter remained in this state till the end of 1844 when Hardinge's plan for model indigenous schools was put to effect. The number of such schools were limited by the paucity of government funds to only 101 for the whole of Bengal Presidency. They had very little success and met with early decay. However, some significant progress in elementary education was achieved in the North-Western Provinces through a plan,<sup>54</sup> undertaken in 1848 by Thomason, the Lieutenant Governor of that province.

Commenting on the failure of the Hardinge scheme in Benagl, Mouat observed:

"The leading defect of the system appears to the Council to have been in the unsuitable nature of the agency employed to carry the scheme into effect. The Revenue System of Bengal does not afford, particularly in its subordinate Native Agency, the great bond between the people and the ruling authorities that exists in the tehsildaree system of the North-Western Provinces. Again, the difficulty of inspection in Bengal, and the consequent infrequency of the visits of the Collector or the Commissioner practically removed the schools beyond the reach of efficient supervision and control."<sup>55</sup>

Again, in another relevant minute, it was remarked:

"Lord Hardinge's 101 Schools failed, because, when they were established, the Government were not prepared with either books, teachers, or superintendence, but it is my belief that in many parts they would have succeeded, (indeed they have succeeded) in spite of the books being unsuitable and the teachers unfit, had the superintendence only been efficient, whereas in many places, perhaps, I might say, in most places, it was injurious."<sup>56</sup>

Halliday's Minute came in this context and almost coincided with the famous Education Despatch of 1854 from the Court of Directors, which emphasized the importance of more attention to vernacular schools, indigenous or other, for elementary education.<sup>57</sup> As enjoined by the same Despatch, a new Education Department headed by the Director of Public Instruction, would replace the former Education Council, and proceed to adopt measures for the expansion and improvement of elementary education. Halliday's proposals for solving the problem of superintendence were bent on full confidence in the ability and expertise of Vidyasagar. While expressing his desire to dispense with the large extra expense for European superintendence, Halliday observed: "I am aware that Native superintendence is not often to be depended upon without European overlooking; but Pundit Ishwar Chunder Surma is an uncommon man, who has shown great energy and zeal in this matter, and I should be well pleased to let him try an experiment, in the result of which he is greatly interested, and which I really think will succeed in his hands."<sup>58</sup>

On the persistent recommendation of Lieutenant Governor Halliday, Vidyasagar was appointed in 1855 to the post of Assistant Inspector for Schools for the districts of Hooghly, Burdwan, Midnapore and Nadia, in addition to his duties as Principal of the Sanskrit College. Already during the previous summer vacation, Vidyasagar made an extensive tour of villages in Hooghly and reported to the Lieutenant Governor on places suitable for the establish-

ment of model schools. He also succeeded in obtaining support from the local people to the extent that they promised to construct school buildings out of their own resources. A large number of model Bengali schools were established in the areas under Vidyasagar's jurisdiction. The schools operating with new curriculum, improved text-books and able teachers, were expected to have an impact on existing indigenous schools. A normal school to train up primary teachers, was set up in the building of the Sanskrit College and Akshay Kumar Datta worked as its Head Master. Thus, Vidyasagar evolved the foundations of the two systems" (viz. *circle system* with its spread effect and *normal school* system with its training effect) which later became the main agencies for the advance of primary education in this part of the country.

For female education, Vidyasagar was a close associate of Drinkwater Bethune and worked for many years as Honorary Secretary of the Bethune School. A significant feature of his effort was to get round the prejudices of his countrymen by proving that female education had the sanction of the *shastras*. However, he could not readily support the proposal of Mary Carpenter and the Bengal Government for the formation of a Normal Class in the Bethune School to train up female teachers. Since the prejudices against the attendance of schools by grown-up females would be extremely strong, Vidyasagar held that "there is little or no chance of securing such females to enter the proposed Normal class. It is presumed that the females must be grown up when they become candidates for admission, but according to the custom of the country, it can hardly be expected that a respectable woman who has passed the age of twelve can be prevailed upon to attend a School for instruction."<sup>10</sup> Later he also declined to serve in a Committee to work for the establishment of a Normal class attached to the Bethune School. As visualized by Vidyasagar, despite some efforts, the plan for a female Normal School proved to be abortive.

It was in regard to some measures Vidyasagar had taken to establish a number of model schools for girls in the districts that he came to conflict with the Director of Public Instruction, and resigned from public service in 1858. Vidyasagar obtained no prior government sanction for these schools, and felt assured by verbal support and encouragement from Lieutenant Governor Halliday. Eventually, however, Government of India declined to render aid for the purpose, and their decision was not reversed even at the request of the Lieutenant Governor. Initially, Gordon-Young, Director of Public Instruction, expressed doubts about the validity of starting those girls' schools. This young officer had also disagreed with Vidyasagar over the procedure of appointment in the Sanskrit College, and he further desired to take some measures which might reduce Vidyasagar's influence on the choice of



text-books at various levels of education. Moreover, Vidyasagar was disappointed in his hope of being promoted to the office of Inspector of Schools. All this<sup>61</sup> led to his resignation on which a senior British officer commented: "He is soon about to retire into private life, and to resign without a pension, his appointments of Principal of the Sanskrit College and Assistant Inspector of Schools . . . . he retires from the service of Government rich in honour, but in nothing else."<sup>62</sup>

In a letter explaining the reasons for his resignation to Lieutenant Governor Halliday, Vidyasagar alleged "that the present system upon which the department of Vernacular Education was conducted was a mere waste of money".<sup>63</sup> Probably, his grievance was a mere reaction against the persistent refusal of the Home Government to sanction any increase in expenditure throughout the years immediately after the Mutiny. It is well-known<sup>64</sup> how financial difficulties had then hampered the working and development of the systems which were already in operation. However, no less real were the contradictions inherent in the outcome of the policy of 1835, which bore out clearly the ineptitude of the theory of 'downward filtration', since "the upper class filter" turned out to be "not a filter, but a jar hermetically sealed".<sup>65</sup>

The lure of English education was created by the circumstances of British domination over the society and polity of Bengal. The priorities in Bentinck's policy declaration of 1835 followed from such a scheme of alien rule. Indeed, with the consolidation of British rule, English education had come to be regarded as the means of opening up prospects of office, wealth and influence. Those who could afford to have education, were increasingly influenced by the idea that "an acquaintance with Bengalee will rather prevent their acquiring wealth . . . those well acquainted with English may obtain situations as writers with long salaries and prospect of higher appointments".<sup>66</sup> Thus, the realities of foreign rule had a decisive role in shaping public preference for education. There is plenty of evidence to prove this point.

The records of the Calcutta School Book Society, a voluntary public association established in 1818 to publish low-priced school text-books of a sound standard, revealed the then growing demand for English education. Its scale of publication of English books increased between 1822 and 1835. This had little conflict with the Society's aims since "the Committee congratulated themselves that their early activities in publishing and distributing class-books in vernacular had resulted in the creation of a taste for English which, after all, was their ultimate object".<sup>67</sup> During the two decades following Bentinck's declaration, there occurred a much faster increase in the Society's publication of books in English.<sup>68</sup>

We can also recall the case of failure of the Hindu College "Pautshāllā",



which was established by the Managers of the Hindu College in 1840 "to check the deterioration of Vernacular studies among the Hindu College youth who were devoting excessive attention to English at the cost of the Vernacular"<sup>69</sup> and "to spread more widely through its agency a knowledge of the Arts and Sciences of Europe through the medium of English which had so far kept this knowledge confined to a few only".<sup>70</sup> All this however met with very little success since "the upper and middle classes of society who mainly patronized the Pautshālā, allowed their wards to remain in the Pautshālā to have some grounding in the Vernacular, but they were more interested in their further education in English either in the Hindoo College or in some English school of the city".<sup>71</sup>

The story of the *Tattvabodhini Pātshālā* provides another example of the kind of influence wielded by English education. This school was founded in 1841 with the specific aim of offering instructions to young Bengali children in their mother tongue. Its life in Calcutta was very short in spite of the earnest efforts of Debendranath Tagore and Akshay Kumar Datta. The causes of its failure become clear from the observations of an informed study on the subject: "the young children who attended Debendranath's Pātshālā in the morning from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., were again required to attend some English school in the city from 10 a.m. in order to acquire knowledge of English which was considered a must by all guardians at this time. This proved too much for the children and they began to leave *Tattvabodhini Pātshālā* one after another. To check this decline, English was introduced as an optional subject. Even then the position did not improve and the lure of a purely English education in the English schools of the city, led to the desertion of large numbers from the *Tattvabodhini Pātshālā*. In this situation Debendranath had no alternative but to close down the Pātshālā at Calcutta".<sup>72</sup> The school was shifted to Bansberia in Hooghly where Debendranath hoped to escape from the competition of English schools. In his speech on the occasion of opening the Bansberia school, Akshay Kumar Datta made a statement which clarified the cause and effect of the developments in Bengal's education: "We are subject to foreign rule, we are being educated in a foreign tongue."<sup>73</sup>

The initial access to English education was seized by the metropolitan upper classes—the absentee landlords, banyans, moneylenders and traders who had grown rich under direct English patronage. Later, in course of the century, opportunities were extended to broader groups "composed of pleaders, teachers, government servants (munsiffs, deputy magistrates, clerks) and to a lesser degree 'mukteers', court 'amlas' etc".<sup>74</sup> Indeed English education became the most important element of mobility and job requirement in the life of the Bengal gentry, whether at the metropolitan or the small

town, or the rural level of colonial society. This was evident in the willingness "To secure for their children a knowledge of our tongue" and "not unfrequently incur an expense which would seem altogether disproportioned to their means."<sup>75</sup> Thus, the great bulk of Anglo-Vernacular Schools in Bengal were "set on foot by persons who living at a distance from the Sudder Station, and who being of comparatively humble means, are unwilling to send their children to a distance from home for their education . . .".<sup>76</sup> They were mostly "tradesmen, petty talookdars, omlahs etc. . . ."

All of them made up the new Bengali middle class. Whether already affluent or aspiring to rise up in wealth and respectability, they owned no role of advancing the production economy—the potentiality or conditions of a class which would necessarily be concerned over the integration of science and production. There was acknowledgement of the merits of Baconian rationality and empirical knowledge, but not of its historical identity with the industry of artificers which lay at the roots of Bacon's vision and utopia.<sup>77</sup> Such an identity was ruled out by the colonial process of deindustrialization and the evolution of a system of landed property without the outlook and orientation of productive enterprise. And so the educated few were not moved with any speed or purpose to the education of the masses, to the circulation of literacy and knowledge among all classes of their countrymen.

All this had its bearing on the state and progress of elementary education in Bengal. While the Government of India appreciated the new schemes introduced in Bengal in 1858, it was at the same time noted in a local report that very little advance had actually been achieved and "The great problem of a sufficiently cheap system of Vernacular education through direct instrumentality of Government remained the subject of discussion and report till 1860".<sup>78</sup> Six years later another report mentioned "that up to that time no good plan for diffusing elementary instruction among the masses of the people had been devised. The efforts to improve the indigenous village schools failed; and the few schools established by Government as models, though affording vernacular education to a limited number of pupils of a higher social grade, seemed to have no effect whatever in raising the level of the indigenous schools below them".<sup>79</sup>

During 1866–67, it was observed that "Bengal is the province of the most marked educational contrasts. On the one hand we find a comparatively small number of students being instructed, mainly at Government expense, in the languages and the philosophy of the West and engaged in the pursuit of University distinctions; side by side are schools for the masses, receiving no aid from Government, where the pupils are taught to scratch letters in the dust. . . ."<sup>80</sup> The annual government expenditure on the lower class schools was Rs. 1.03 lakhs in Bengal, while local government in Bombay, North-

West Provinces and Punjab spent Rs. 3.93 lakhs, Rs 3.37 lakhs and Rs. 1.67 lakhs, respectively, for the same object. The situation showed no improvement in 1870-71, since "In no province do the statistics of primary schools seem so inconsistent with the declaration that Government expenditure should be mainly directed to the provision of elementary education for the mass of the people as in Bengal."<sup>81</sup> The Bengal Government allocated only 11.7 per cent of its total educational expenditure to the lower class schools, while the corresponding proportions were 30.88 per cent, 24.7 per cent, and 30 per cent in Bombay, North-West Provinces and Punjab, respectively.

Indeed, wherever English was taught it swallowed up everything else and "the whole of the means of education . . . being insufficient, the Vernacular is likely to be the more pinched of the two, so that is not done which might be wished".<sup>82</sup> The Bengali gentry became extremely zealous of their right and means to have English education. For example, during the Lieutenant Governorship of Sir William Grey, a special communication was necessary to urge the Government of India not to strengthen the apprehension that it was opposed to the further spread of English education among the Bengali gentry.<sup>83</sup> The reduction made by Sir George Campbell in the grants to the Berhampore, Krishnanagar and Sanskrit Colleges provoked dissatisfaction among the upper and literate classes of Bengal. Further, certain memorials were presented against Campbell's policy to apportion more for mass education by subtracting from the sums devoted to higher education.<sup>84</sup>

The nature of grievance among the upper and middle classes was clear from arguments in a speech at a Calcutta Town Hall meeting, held in June, 1870: "The move to restrict higher education is as stupid as deserting a plot of land, ploughed with hard labour, sown with seeds and with sprouting plants, for a (wild-cat) endeavour to clear a jungle."<sup>85</sup> The fruits of enlightenment were acknowledged by the British Joint Magistrate of 24 Parganas, who also spoke at the same meeting: "It is no mean return that we derive from higher education by obtaining able Deputy Magistrates and eloquent lawyers. I have visited all European countries. Nowhere can you find such love for English as exists in Bengal."<sup>86</sup> Among those who spoke for *status quo a la* Macaulay were men of foremost eminence like Rajendra Lal Mitra, Kessori Chand Mitra, Joykrishna Mukherjee, and Mahendralal Sarkar.

The stagnation of elementary education in Bengal remained a perpetual problem.<sup>87</sup> The grants-in-aid system was found to be unsuitable for this level of education, since the beneficiaries were able neither to pay for it nor to organize local schools. Due to the inflexibility of revenue assessment under the Permanent Settlement, both Local and India Governments were hesitant in levying a 1 per cent school cess on the land revenue in Bengal, an authority

which had been sanctioned to provincial governments to raise resources for elementary mass education. Following up the recommendation of the Education Commission (1882), several measures were taken in 1886 to improve and consolidate primary education. But the results were not assuring.<sup>88</sup> Even after 1887-88 when the District Boards were assigned the responsibility for primary education, the position in Bengal was far from satisfactory since those bodies failed to deal soundly with the problems of middle and primary schools and "The most influential men on the Boards are usually pleaders and *mukhtars*, men almost invariably foreigners to the District the people of which they are supposed to represent, with absolutely no knowledge often of the geography and always of the requirements of the interior of the District."<sup>89</sup>

The District Census Reports of 1891 indicated some characteristic trends in the growth of education. For example, the Report on Nadia stated: "The *bhadralok* class comprise the few well-to-do Muhammadan families and the higher castes of Hindus, such as Brahmans, Baidyas and Kayasthas. The liberal professions and the Government services are largely recruited from it, and to the men of this class, English education has become a necessity. The demand for English education is spreading, and of all educational institutions, high and middle English schools prosper most".<sup>90</sup> The Report added that primary education could not be said to show much progress.<sup>91</sup> In Mymensingh "within the last ten years secondary education has been stimulated to the detriment of primary education".<sup>92</sup> There was the report from Pabna that "a gradual loss both of school and pupils . . . is confined to the lower primaries only".<sup>93</sup> The district of Rangpore also experienced "a large decrease both in the numbers of primary schools and in that of their pupils".<sup>94</sup>

Again, the pattern of development was also evident from the location of educational facilities in several districts. For example, in Khulna, "Probably the most advanced part is that which lies on the banks of the Bhairab for a distance of about 8 or 10 miles, both above and below the town of Khulna. In this tract lie 4 out of the 8 higher class English schools in the district viz. those of Khulna, Senahati, Daulatpore and Khararia. The proximity of the headquarters station and the fact that there are in this tract large and populous villages, inhabited by persons of the Brahman, Baidya and Kayastha castes, are the causes of its educational advancement."<sup>95</sup> Further, in the same district the middle English and middle Vernacular schools were mainly situated in areas inhabited by the higher classes of both Musalmans and Hindus. On the other hand, areas 'inhabited chiefly' by lower classes of people had "only a few middle class schools, and even the primary schools are few and far between, and are thinly attended, while many of the latter are either closed, or remain open only in name during the busy seasons of cultivation".<sup>96</sup>

By its very history then, the province of Bengal in the nineteenth century, generated neither the resources, nor the social leadership for the expansion of elementary education among the masses. Time and again, an irony of British imperialism in India was reflected in the tenuous objective of the rulers to attain through education what had been denied to the country primarily because of their very system of economic exploitation. Bound in the nexuses of subordinate activities and wealth of the colonial economy, the new Bengali middle class offered little support and initiative for mass education, particularly when it would be encouraged at the cost of their own facilities for English learning, the only means of living and respectability available to them. Moreover, Bengal was probably a worse victim of primitive plunder than the later annexations of Britain's Indian Empire. And then came the sequence of the Permanent Settlement and decline of native industries which dominated the economic background to the emergence of the new Bengali middle class with English education. All this made Bengal "the province of the most marked educational contrasts", that we have noted already.

Vidyasagar's programme for Vernacular Education was also subject to the contradictions of his society. There was very little scope for the toiling people to benefit from Vidyasagar's plan. Though of a primitive kind, older indigenous systems supplied a course of instructions which was considered to be valuable for its practical uses. The new programme had genuine concern for conveying to students the rudiments of knowledge derived from western sciences and natural philosophy. But there were no means to connect those lessons with the life and work of the people. This is where the state of the economy and society under foreign rule did not correspond to the real potentialities of a rational awakening. The anomalies of the situation were typified as follows in a school inspector's report: "an increased education of the kind, such as it has so far been, has only tended to make the men less inclined to take to, or improve, their own natural callings and indeed less fit for business, trade, agriculture and industry of any kind . . ."

In his plans and activity, Vidyasagar could not do away with this reality, but tried for the neutralization of some gaps and cracks on its surface. Primarily, Vidyasagar aimed at building the rational content of Western learning into all levels of education. And then the gaps which exercised his attention were related to opportunities of education for the poorer gentry in small towns and villages of Bengal. Such gaps and their hazards were known to Vidyasagar from his own life-experience. But however strong were the inner sympathies and rational predilections of his outlook, it was not absorbed in an adequate comprehension of the larger reality of his country and its people under imperialism. Inevitably, his efforts had been entangled in the exigencies of public service under British rulers, and in the ebb and flow of

their goodwill and assurances. Such were the limits of the social framework that deterred the execution of the programme Vidyasagar had ideally worked out.

The constraints of the social framework had equally serious consequences in the sphere of higher education. The links of the latter with the job market came to be formally institutionalized after 1857, through the origin and growth of affiliating universities which "were not corporations of scholars, but corporations of administrators; they had nothing to do directly with the training of men, but only with the examining of candidates; they were not concerned with learning, except in so far as learning can be tested by examinations . . . it led the students to value the discipline of training not for its own sake, but mainly as a means of obtaining marketable qualifications".<sup>99</sup> And by 1882, western education of this kind "with the affiliating university as its guardian, had fully taken root in India, and most completely in Bengal".<sup>100</sup>

We can have a glimpse of what happened to elementary education from the same Report:

"The preponderant and disproportionate development of the secondary branch, . . . was actually intensified between 1882 and 1902. What is more, the growth of the higher types of secondary schools was proportionately far greater than the growth of the more elementary types; there was actually a decrease in the type of schools known as 'middle vernacular'. Nothing could more clearly show that it was not education at large, but English education, and especially English education preparatory to the university course, which aroused the enthusiasm of Bengal."<sup>100</sup>

But the aim of passing examinations to qualify for employment reached its own limits by fast saturation of limited opportunities. In twenty-one years, from 1857 to 1877, 23,740 students matriculated from the three universities of India, and there was also sizable increase in the number of those passing the higher examinations. Meanwhile, the Education Report of 1870 referred frequently to a supply vastly in excess of the demand, not only from Government offices, but from all sources of employment. The position of the educated native had become the subject of despairing comments in a Government 'Blue Book':

"He is precluded by his education from manual labour, and from recruiting that class on whose industry and intelligence the prosperity of the country depends. He finds himself in keenest competition for intellectual employment—for there are thousands like himself—as the market, though ample, has been overstocked, and all the while industrial education has been neglected altogether, and there are

millions for whom no kind of instruction has been provided by the Government at all."<sup>101</sup>

There was a lot of talk about the need for technical and industrial education. Analysing the economic predicament of Bengal, where "European manufactures have undersold the Bengali artisan in his own country" and the entire society was gravitating in the direction of agriculture and unproductive services, the Bengal Report to the Education Commission (1882) pleaded for the establishment of technical colleges and schools, "such as those which in Europe have followed upon the extension of 'non-classical' or 'real' schools".<sup>102</sup> In a speech seconding the resolution of Maharaja Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore for raising a fund to commemorate the Empress's Jubilee, Sir W. W. Hunter, the Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University, spoke in 1887 for encouragement to technical education and laid out a perspective of combining India's labour with England's capital, both being cheapest in the world, for the industrial development of Bengal.<sup>103</sup>

No doubt Hunter's perspective was a reflex of the well-known projection of the British economy in the closing quarter of the last century, when, faced with the growing challenge of newcomers to industrial revolutions in Europe and America,

"Britain exported her immense accumulated historical advantages in the underdeveloped world, as the greatest commercial power, and as the greatest source of international loan capital; and had, in reserve the exploitation of the 'natural protection' of the home market and if need be the 'artificial protection' of political control over a large empire. When faced with a challenge, it was easier and cheaper to retreat into an as yet unexploited part of one of these favoured zones rather than to meet competition face to face."<sup>104</sup>

Among those 'favoured zones' again, India came to have a position tending more to industrial deprivation since

"Up to 1914, India formed the biggest single foreign market for traditional British exports—particularly for cotton textiles, but to a lesser extent for engineering goods; India's exports to hard currency areas provided the critical balancing item in the current balance of payments of the British Empire and more particularly of Britain, with the rest of the world; . . . India was useful less as a field for the reinvestment of profits made by British nationals elsewhere than as the dependable source from which part of the needed surplus for maintaining the British controlled gold standard and the political apparatus of Pax Britannica was derived."<sup>105</sup>

Consolidating the data on British capital exports in the last half of the



nineteenth century, we have clear evidence of much larger investments in countries of the New World and in Australasia, than what flowed to India and Ceylon. The bigger spurts of British investments in India occurred before 1865 and their spheres were confined to railways, tea, jute, banks, shipping and mercantile establishments. The main concern of such investments was for increasing the capacity of the Indian economy to export marketable surpluses of primary produce to Britain. Such being the pattern of investment of "British capital—and floating British-owned capital in India mobilised by Agency Houses", the task of "developing" India was reduced to "the annual ritual exchanges between the Finance Member and the Chamber of Commerce representative in the Legislative Council on the budget day, a matter of mutual congratulation".<sup>106</sup>

Thus, Hunter's idea of combining cheap Indian labour and British capital was a *non sequitur* because of India's special position in the imperial order. The tardy beginnings which were witnessed in plantations, coal and jute of Bengal made no sound augury for the country's industrialization. Such activities took an institutional form which led to "straddling of different fields by the same managing agency house" and "facilitated the maintenance of individual or collective monopolies"<sup>107</sup> under British control enjoying discriminatory state support and interlocked banking facilities. The extent of discrimination, official and semi-official, against indigenous business was big and far-reaching enough to stifle all its initiative and enterprise. And even in the sphere of public service, which caused worries about the excess supply of educated natives, the proportion of Indians and Burmans among all officers in India with a monthly income of Rs. 500 and above, was found to be only 12 per cent in 1887.<sup>108</sup>

A fundamental transformation of the entire political economy was called for to remove the country's economic predicament. It was necessary to change the whole disposition of capital and wealth and, for that matter, the direction of economic surplus towards cumulative advance of agriculture and industries. Failing to do so, the policy of promoting institutions to train up technicians and engineers would result in the creation of skills with no adequate economic demand for their absorption. Such was the anomaly of having real education without the release of forces for industrialization, of aiming to achieve through education what was denied to the economy. No wonder then that the regulation of the Calcutta University to provide for degrees in mechanical and mining engineering remained a dead-letter as late as 1919.<sup>109</sup> It was not only the absence of suitable training facilities that was responsible, since the paucity of outturn led one Director of Land Records and Agriculture to propose a reconstitution of the Sibpur College so that "in addition to training in engineering it should provide training for managers



and sub-managers for estates, tahsildars or land stewards, survey officers, veterinarians, accountants and possible other callings."<sup>110</sup>

Indeed, newspapers and periodicals of the time frequently dwelt on the growing problem of educated unemployment. For example, *Somprakāsh* wrote in its editorial of an issue of March, 1886:

"They, (i.e. job-seekers) don't have the means to get hold of capital for taking up business or industry . . . Students of Civil Engineering can look for no improvements; the Medical Department has no vacancy to absorb even one more person. . . . Not even the barest means of living are available to those who have obtained Degrees in Agriculture from Cirencester College after incurring a lot of expenditure for their studies."<sup>111</sup>

The growing enormity of the problem was revealed in a popular narrative of 1889, which gave the account an imaginary travel of four gods of heaven (*Brahmā*, *Indra*, *Nārāyaṇ*, and *Varuṇ*) through parts of British India and recorded *Lord Brahmā* observing about Calcutta:

"How strange! The people I can see, meet, and talk with are all clerks! One finds few shopkeepers, capitalists, professors, doctors, tanners, potters and blacksmiths among Bengalis—they are all clerks. This country is going waste, its industries are in ruins; can there be a nation of any greater fools than would see and yet look past such a state of things?"<sup>112</sup>

Thus, at all levels, education had to share its destiny with the facts and tendencies of the colonial economy in nineteenth century Bengal. The economic realities of subservience to the imperial order, which we have noted already obtained most thoroughly in Bengal and the eastern region of the country. British investments, in tea plantations, coal mines, and jute industry, created a kind of capitalism which had none of capitalism's dynamic characteristics. Thwarted as it was by the nature of the agrarian system, the persistent penury of the home market and unremitting obstruction of dominant foreign capital, indigenous private wealth of the region was almost entirely absorbed in lands, usury and petty local trade of a subordinate kind.

Alongside those economic processes, English education came to be the hallmark of the new Bengali middle class, whose social role and respectability had no organic links with an ability to advance social production. The transition from traditional to western learning did occur, but not on a scale and comprehension to embrace industrial transformation of the economy. Nevertheless, the changes in the intellectual pabulum gave rise to new problems of individuality and conscious social direction of life and environment. Frequently, the problems got confused in a spurious conciliation of Indian idealism and imported liberal sanctions, which were of several varie-

ties in a society where the new intelligentsia had the perpetual experience of a disparity between education and social praxis, between their received values and doctrine of liberal autonomy and the voids of the social structure unresolved by the same learning.

In all this there often entered an element of hypocrisy. Vidyasagar chose to struggle against both hypocrisy and infirmity for his aim to attain more positive accord between learning and life. In the crucial Ballantyne correspondence, he was vehemently opposed to an outlook of shoddy compromise between Hindu philosophy and western knowledge. The same conviction was writ large on all his plans to reform and spread education. For Vidyasagar, the fusion of tradition and modernity was a more basic challenge; the response was embodied in his creation of a coherent and elegant style of Bengali prose, in articulating its ability to assimilate and express worthwhile knowledge from the west. Indeed, in a text-book like *Bodhodaya*, Vidyasagar provided an opportunity for his countrymen, as none had done before him, to acquire the rudiments of new knowledge in their own language. Equally significant was his concern for the education of women and for the expansion and improvement of opportunities for learning in towns and villages away from the city of Calcutta.

His efforts met with little success. But for the temporary achievements of his short span of work as Assistant Inspector of Schools, the overall record of elementary education in Bengal was far from satisfactory. The experience with female education was not much different. And close association<sup>113</sup> with higher education created for him no illusions about its efficacy and usefulness. Once asked to account for the poor standards of higher education, he answered by an analogy to the story of a dope-addict, who narrated that various sweets offered at the temple of Tarakeswar, were of the same taste, since they had all been produced in one mould of a big machine inside the earth:

"Our machine opens its doors to students after they pay fees for tuition, fan and, examinations, and we show to them teachers, *pundits*, benches, chairs, ink and inkpots, pens, pencils, slate and books. And then putting students inside the machine, we switch on the key. Later they all turn out, some at the Second Class stage, some after the Entrance, some after L.A., some B.A.'s, and some M.A.'s, on being produced in the same machine. But each of them writes 'I has', since they have all been processed in the same machine and its common mould."<sup>114</sup>

Further, comparing the system to that of a village ferry-man who exacts much more than due fare in times of monsoon flood, and tells passengers to float

adrift on their own after he has placed them on a boat without complete fittings, Vidyasagar commented:

"Like that ferry-man, we stay way above the flood-waters. Various fees are realised by us from students who come for learning and then we tell them: there are your schools, benches, teachers and *pundits*; go and study buying your pen paper and books. Come each month and pay your fees here."<sup>115</sup>

Education formed a large part of Vidyasagar's own life-work, but the historical destinies of his society and its education converged in a manner that proved decisive for the defeat of his positive goals. For Vidyasagar, it was a defeat despite his lifelong struggle and endeavour. And for his society, it revealed that a mask, and never a mission, of enlightenment was the true affinity of the Bengali middle class whom Vidyasagar strived in vain to enfold in the identity of his cause and his struggle.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

This paper was written for this volume in December, 1974. It forms a part of the composite monograph "Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and His Elusive Milestones" subsequently released as an Occasional Paper by the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. With further revision and addition the work is now awaiting publication as a book from Rishi India, Calcutta.

The writer is grateful to Barun De for his help and advice throughout the preparation of this article. Many of these ideas took shape in discussions with his colleagues, particularly with Indrani Ray, Pradyumna Bhattacharya, Nripendra Nath Bandyopadhyay, and Partha Chatterjee in the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. Several discussions with Sumit Sarkar (Department of History, Delhi University), Arun Das Gupta (Department of History, Calcutta University) and Pranab Ranjan Ray (District Gazetteer Unit, Government of West Bengal) were helpful. The writer thanks them all and bears the sole responsibility for the paper.

<sup>1</sup> JOHN ROSSELLI, *Lord William Bentinck—The Making of a Liberal Imperialist 1774-1839*, Delhi, 1974, 292.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Part IV.

<sup>3</sup> H. WOODROW (Coll. & ed.), *Macaulay's Minutes on Education in India*. Calcutta, 1862, 115 (*Macaulay's Minutes*). The reference is to the following statement in the Minute of 2nd February, 1835: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in words, and in intellect."

<sup>4</sup> WALTER HAMILTON, *East India Gazetteer*, Vol. I, London, 1828, 323.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>6</sup> C. BOUTROS, *An Inquiry into The System of Education Most Likely to Be Generally Popular and Beneficial in Behar and the Upper Provinces*, Serampore Press, 1842, 9.

<sup>7</sup> FANNY PARKES, *Wanderings of a Pilgrim in search of the Picturesque, During Four-and-Twenty Years in the East, with Revelations of Life in the Zenana*, Vol. I, London, 1850, 29-30.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>10</sup> FANNY PARKES, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, 105.

<sup>11</sup> ANIL CHANDRA DAS GUPTA (comp. & ed.), *The Days of John Company (Selections from Calcutta Gazette) 1824-1832*, Calcutta, 1959, 156.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Address, dated 11th December, 1823, from Rammohan Roy to Lord Amherst, in H. SHARP

(comp. & ed.)—*Selections from Educational Records*, Part I, 1781–1839, Calcutta, 1920, reprinted for the National Archives of India, Delhi, 1965, 99–101.

<sup>14</sup> ANATHNATH BASU (ed.)—*Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835–1838)*, University of Calcutta, 1941. (*Adam's Report*). In 1835, William Adam was directed by the Government to enquire into the state of Native education in the districts of Bengal and Behar. The result of his enquiry was contained in three valuable Reports, drawn up between 1835 and 1838. The Reports indicated that, in spite of their primitive nature, the indigenous vernacular schools supplied a course of instruction which ryots, small proprietors, and shopkeepers considered to be useful. The leading principle of the plan proposed by Adam for the extension and improvement of public instruction, was to afford encouragement to existing Native schools. He was against the use of English as the sole or chief medium of conveying knowledge to Indians and recommended that new content of learning should be imparted to students through their own language.

<sup>15</sup> *Adam's Report*, 72.

<sup>16</sup> *Macaulay's Minutes*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Minute by Lord Auckland, the Governor-General, dated 24th November, 1839, IN SHARP (comp. & ed.)—*op. cit.*, 152, 155.

<sup>18</sup> ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR—*Vidyasagar Charit* (an autobiographical note in Bengali, published by his son in 1891, after Vidyasagar's death). IN Gopal Halder ed. *Vidyasagar Rachana Samgraha* (Writings of Vidyasagar), Vol III, Calcutta, 1972, 420. (*Vidyasagar Charit*).

<sup>19</sup> *Adam's Report*, 169–70.

<sup>20</sup> *Vidyasagar Charit*, 419.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 412. Also SUBAL CHANDRA MITRA—*Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (Story of His Life and Work)*, Calcutta, first published in 1902, reprint 1975, 6. Thakurdas first came to Calcutta in 1804 or 1805, when it was very difficult to have English education in that city. The few expensive English schools which were there, could be used only by the rich. Thakurdas managed to learn a little English from a Bengali employee of a mercantile firm, who had only a 'tolerable knowledge' of the language.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>23</sup> SIVNATH SHASTRI—*Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkālīn Baṅga Samāj* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1903, 45–46. On a first attempt, Ramtanu Lahiri could not get admission to the school of David Hare, since all free seats had already been filled up. Ramtanu was advised to run after Hare's palanquin for some days, so that Hare might, out of pity for this small boy, grant him admission. Ramtanu succeeded in the process after more than two months. It was then a usual practice with poor boys to run after Hare's palanquin crying out: "me poor boy, have pity on me, me take in your school".

<sup>24</sup> BRAJENDRANATH BANDOPADHYAYA—*Kalikātā Saṁskṛta Kalejer Itihās* (Bengali Publication marking the 125th anniversary of the college) Part I: 1824–1858, Sanskrit College, Calcutta, 1948, 7.

<sup>25</sup> SAMBHUCHANDRA VIDYARATNA—*Vidyasagar Jivancharit o Bhramnirās* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1962 (first published in 1891), 22.

<sup>26</sup> JAMES KERR—*Review of Public Instructions in the Bengal Presidency from 1835 to 1851*, Part I, Calcutta, 1852, 6.

<sup>27</sup> C. E. TREVELYAN—*On the Education of the People of India*, Calcutta, 1838, 80–81. The following evidence was cited to prove the demand for English education: "The average monthly collection on the account from the pupils of the Hindu College for February and March 1836, was sicca rupees 1325. Can there be more conclusive evidence of the real state of demand than this? The Hindu College is held under the same roof as the new Sanskrit College, at which thirty pupils were hired at 8 rupees each, and seventy at 5 rupees or 590 rupees a month in all".

<sup>28</sup> INDRA MITRA—*Kārunāsagar Vidyasagar* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1971, ch. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 108, also Kerr—*op. cit.*, 106.

<sup>31</sup> H. SHARP (comp. & ed.)—*op. cit.*, 145–46.

<sup>32</sup> BENOV GHOSH—*Vidyasagar o Bāṅālī Samāj* (in Bengali), 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1973, ch. 7 gives a perceptive account of this background.

<sup>33</sup> KRISHNA MOHAN BANERJEE—*The Persecuted; or dramatic scenes illustrative of the present state of Hindoo Society in Calcutta*, Calcutta, 1831, 11. Excerpt from a long soliloquy of Bany Lal, a young Hindu imbued with western learning and ideas, who cannot be persuaded by his conservative father to do penance for having forbidden food. Bany Lal says to himself "Utter a falsehood! deceive friends and relations by a penance! my soul shrinks with horror at these reflections. No—a father's cries are not stronger than those of truth".

<sup>54</sup> INDRA MITRA, *op. cit.*, 132-133. The statement occurs in Vidyasagar's letter of resignation of 20th April, 1847.

<sup>55</sup> BENOY GHOSH—*op. cit.*, 156.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 513-14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 13.

<sup>60</sup> INDRA MITRA—*op. cit.*, Appendix 2, 710-19.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix 5, 723-26.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 724.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix 6, 728.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 730.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 731.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 732.

<sup>68</sup> Among the Bengali text-books were *Varnaparichaya* (a book in two parts for beginners in Bengali alphabet) published in 1855; *Kathāmālā* (an adaptation of *Aesop's Fables*) published in 1856; *Nitibodha* (an adaptation of Chambers's *Moral Class Book*, and written jointly with Raj Krishan Bandopadhyaya) published in 1856; *Charitāvalī* (life-sketches of persons who, though born in indigent circumstances or in other difficulties, rose through hard labour and strength of character to great attainments in learning) published in 1856; *Bodhodaya* (an adaptation of Chambers's *Rudiments of Knowledge*—the book conveys elementary instructions on the nature of the physical and animal world, about the human body and its principal organs, about units of time and measurement, about agriculture, and on the nature of industry, trade, exchange and society) published in 1851; *Ākhyānmañjarī* (in three volumes—adaptation of English narratives, stories etc. for advanced Bengali reading) published in 1863.

Earlier, Vidyasagar wrote *Bāṅgālār Itihās* (History of Bengal from the reign of Nawab Sirajudoulla to the Governor Generalship of Lord William Bentinck—a Bengali adaptation of part of Marshman's *History of Bengal*) published in 1848, and *Jivancharit* (based on Chambers's *Biographies*, it contains life-sketches of great scientists and rational thinkers like Copernicus, Newton, Herschel, Grotius, etc.) published in 1849.

<sup>69</sup> J. C. GHOSH—*Bengali Literature*, London, 1948, 126.

<sup>70</sup> BENOY GHOSH—*op. cit.*, Appendix 3, 542-45. Two letters of Vidyasagar make it clear that though the right of admission could not be extended to castes lower than *Kayasthas*. Vidyasagar himself saw "no objection to the admission of other castes than Brahmans and Vaidyas or in other words, different orders of Shudras to the Sanskrit College". Again, on the issue of admitting a *suvarna banik* student, Vidyasagar, though unable to recommend the case because of the prejudice of orthodox Pundits, expressed his own personal opposition to the exclusive system.

<sup>71</sup> INDRA MITRA—*op. cit.*, 145.

<sup>72</sup> Correspondence relating to Vernacular Education in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, No. 22. IN J. LONG (comp. & ed.)—*Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government*, Calcutta, 1855, 65-71.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-74.

<sup>74</sup> H. A. STARK, *Vernacular Education in Bengal 1813 to 1912*, Calcutta, 1916, 85. The essentials of the system were that Government should at its own cost provide one superior school in each *tehsil* or local division which should serve as a model to be emulated by existing indigenous schools. Special visiting and inspecting agency would work to persuade the local public in this regard. Also Despatch from the Secretary of State for India, to the Government of India (No. 4, dated 7th April, 1859, paras 15-16). IN *A Collection of Despatches from the Home Government on the Subject of Education in India 1854 to 1868*, Calcutta, 1870, 177-178. (*A Collection of Despatches*).

<sup>75</sup> Letter of 3rd October, 1853 from F. J. Mouat, Secretary, Council of Education to Cecil Beadon, Secretary to the Government of Bengal. In James Long (comp. & ed.)—*op. cit.*, 31.

<sup>76</sup> Mr. H. Rickett's Minute dated 9th July, 1854, IN *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>77</sup> From the Court of Directors of the East India Company to the Governor General of India in Council (No. 49, dated 19th July 1854) paras 87-89, IN *A Collection of Despatches*, 22.

<sup>78</sup> JAMES LONG (comp. & ed.)—*op. cit.*, 67.

<sup>79</sup> Education Commission: Bengal Provincial Committee, *Report on the Progress of Education in the Lower Provinces of Bengal to the close of the Year 1881-82*, Calcutta, 27-28. (*Bengal Report 1881-82*). Circle System consisted in the establishment of a model school in a defined

area to spread emulation effect and/or in the appointment of a competent *pandit* over a number of indigenous schools; *Normal School System* required that existing *gurus* or some other nominees of the villages having indigenous schools would be sent to a Normal School for training.

<sup>60</sup> INDRA MITRA, *op. cit.*, 247-48.

<sup>61</sup> SUBAL CHANDRA MITRA, *op. cit.*, Ch XVII. In 1855, Departments of Public Instruction were formed to take the place of more informal and less bureaucratic Council of Education. This was among the causes of the exit of Vidyasagar from Government service and of the end of his career as adviser to the Bengal Government in its programme of mass education. *Vide* VINA MAZUMDAR—*Education and Social Change*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study Simla, 1972, 50.

<sup>62</sup> ARABINDA GUHA (ed.), *Unpublished Letters of Vidyasagar*, Calcutta, 1971, 48.

<sup>63</sup> SUBAL CHANDRA MITRA, *op. cit.*, 341.

<sup>64</sup> THOMAS R. METCALF, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India 1857-70*, London, 1965, 126.

<sup>65</sup> Stark, *op. cit.*, 89. The comment was made by Lal Behari Day in refutation of a speech by Kinsori Chand Mitter at a meeting of the British India Association, in 1868. Kinsori Chand asserted that considerable progress of elementary education had been achieved already. According to the 'downward filtration theory', education should begin at the top, that is, with the upper classes, and the filter through their agency to the larger masses of people. This was an essential premise of the policy of Bentinck and Macaulay.

<sup>66</sup> The comment was made in an editorial note of the *Samāchār Darpan* dated 13th December, 1834. Cited in N. L. Basak—*History of Vernacular Education in Bengal (1800-1854)*, Calcutta, 1974, 259.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 346-47.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 363.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>74</sup> PRADIP SINHA—*Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Calcutta, 1965, 42.

<sup>75</sup> Home Department—*Note on the State of Education in India*, 1861-62, 55.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> CHRISTOPHER HILL—*Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, Panther, London, 1972, 86.

<sup>78</sup> A. M. MONTEATH—*Note on the State of Education in India*, 1862, IN *Selections from Educational Records of the Government of India*, Vol. I. *Educational Reports 1859-71*. National Archives of India, Delhi, 1960, 52 (*Educational Reports 1859-71*).

<sup>79</sup> A. M. MONTEATH—*Notes on the State of Education in India*, 1865-66, IN *Educational Reports 1859-71*, 125.

<sup>80</sup> A. P. HOWELL—*Note on the State of Education in India during 1866-67* (Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Home Department, No. LXVII), Calcutta, 1868, 60 (*State of Education, 1866-67*).

<sup>81</sup> A. P. HOWELL—*Education in British India (1870-71)*. IN *Educational Reports 1859-71*, 367.

<sup>82</sup> B. D. BASU—*History of Education in India Under East India Company*, Calcutta, 98. The statement occurred in the Evidence of Friedrich Halliday on 25th July, 1853, before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Indian territories.

<sup>83</sup> C. E. BUCKLAND—*Bengal under the Lieutenant Governors* (Vol. I), Calcutta, 1901, 470.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 532-33.

<sup>85</sup> *Somprokash* (Bengali Weekly edited by Dwarakanath Vidvabhushan), 28 Ashādh, 1277 B.S. IN BENOY GHOSH (comp. & ed.)—*Sāmāyik Patre Bāmlār Samājchitra* (Bengali), Vol IV, Calcutta, 1966, 544 (*Samājchitra*).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 545.

<sup>87</sup> Education Commission—*Bengal Report 1881-82*, 27-30.

<sup>88</sup> H. A. STARK—*op. cit.*, 131-133.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>90</sup> *Report on the Census of the District of Nadia 1891*, 10.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Report on the Census of the District of Mymensingh 1891*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Report on the Census of the District of Pabna 1891*, 8.

- <sup>94</sup> *Report on the Census of the District of Raypore 1891*, 9.
- <sup>95</sup> *Report on the Census of the District of Khulna 1891*, 11.
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>97</sup> Excerpt cited from the Report of a Deputy Inspector of Schools. IN *Report on the Census of the District of Noakhaly 1891*, 37.
- <sup>98</sup> Calcutta University Commission (1919)—*Report*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1919, 48.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.
- <sup>101</sup> JAMES JOHNSTON—*Abstract and Analysis of the Report of the "Indian Education Commission"*, With notes on "The Recommendations" in Full, London 1884, 45.
- <sup>102</sup> Education Commission—*Bengal Report 1881-82*, 148.
- <sup>103</sup> F. J. E. SPRING—*Technical Education in India*, Calcutta, 1887, 5.
- <sup>104</sup> ERIC J. HOBSEAWM—*Industry and Empire* (The Pelican Economic History of Britain, Vol. 3), Pelican Books, 1969, 191.
- <sup>105</sup> A. K. BAGCHI—*Private Investment in India, 1900-1939*, Cambridge, 1971, 420.
- <sup>106</sup> S. BHATTACHARYYA—*Financial Foundations of the British Raj*, Simla, 1971, LXXVI. A summary of the data on British Overseas investments is given in the Introduction, LXIX-LXXVI.
- <sup>107</sup> A. K. BAGCHI—*op. cit.*, 176.
- <sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.
- <sup>109</sup> Calcutta University Commission (1919)—*Report*, Vol. III, 93.
- <sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.
- <sup>111</sup> *Somprakāsh*, No. 20, 17 Chaitra 1292 B.S. IN BINOY GHOSH—*Samājchitra*, Vol. IV, 349-50.
- <sup>112</sup> DURGA CHARAN ROY—*Devganer Martye Agaman* (Bengali), 6th edition, Calcutta, 1364 B.S., 555, first published in 1889.
- <sup>113</sup> C. E. BUCKLAND—*op. cit.*, Vol. 2, 1034-35. Outside of public service, one major work of Vidyasagar consisted in the establishment of the Metropolitan Institution in Calcutta in 1864, and in its successful operation as a first grade college under his management. He was one of the first Fellows of the Calcutta University, after its inception in 1857. Also see Indra Mitra—*op. cit.*, Ch. 16.
- <sup>114</sup> HARAPRASAD SHASTRI—*Vidyasagar Prasāṅga* (Bengali) IN Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay (ed.) *Haraprasad Rachanāvalī*, Vol. 2, Calcutta, 1960, 14.
- <sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

# History of the Bengalees: The Unrecorded Period

ASOK K. GHOSH

THE term history is, perhaps, slightly ambiguous both in its meaning and connotation. The generalized concept denotes either events or records of the past. The exceptions are hardly met with from the general norm, more especially in Indian context. Professor Niharranjan Ray's (1949) work on the History of the Bengalees (in Bengali) may certainly be considered as one of the few exceptions of very high order. His treatment of historical facts is indeed conjunctive in nature in which the investigations on man as a social being point to the development limited by space and time. In fact, his logic of history and historical objectives are lively and effectively meaningful.

Despite these it is not clear enough why he started his thesis from the middle of historical sequences rather than from the very beginning. The reasons for this may be: (a) the earlier part was considered as prehistoric, and (b) the information on the earlier period was too meagre to understand the relevant situation of the livelihood of the people. The first reason is not very practical as the term 'prehistory' is a misnomer (Daniel, 1962). History is essentially human which started with the emergence of man. The mere absence of writing can never be a sufficient reason to label a period 'pre-historic'. Even today there are living societies that have neither scripts nor written records. Moreover, they have not been included within the scaffolding of history. Should they be called 'prehistoric'?

It is really the scarcity of material for the reconstruction of the earliest of human history that has led to the coinage of the term 'prehistory' with the unfortunate consequence that much of the basis of the so-called 'historical' period is left unstudied. The onset of history then appears to be a sudden event without any root.



The second consideration is mainly of limitation. Materials for the purpose of historical reconstruction must meet a minimum necessity-level so that speculations can be substantiated with relevant data. It may be conceded that this was lacking even as late as a decade ago. However, this minimum information is now available and can serve the purpose of constructing the generalized framework of earliest human history. The present endeavour may be considered as a prelude to Professor Ray's work, mentioned earlier.

### *Consideration of the area*

In the context of history there are two main factors which are of prime importance: the people and the place. In other words, history of which group and of which area. In his work Professor Ray has laid emphasis on the people and that too is perhaps apt from his own viewpoint. He has defined the people on the basis of set patterns of culture complex, including language. Again, in his treatment and display of historical facts he has drawn attention over a very wide area through a considerable period of time. In such a situation the history of people which crosses over time and space has become meaningful. According to Professor Ray the people are the Bengalees—a group with a specific language and having the assemblage of distinct culture traits.

The present study is devoid of such scope and this is mainly due to the fact that much information necessary for specificity are lacking of which language, scripts, written records and allied source materials are the main. Under the circumstances, the history with which the author is concerned is not really of the Bengalees but of the place where Professor Ray concentrated his area of research. It is true that the areas of investigation of Professor Ray and of the present author do not exactly coincide with each other in the strictest sense of the term, rather in superimposition there is a common area of overlap and the rest differ from one another. The reasons for this difference may be explained in different ways. The geographical area of Bengal is more a political division and a number of shifts were made at different times in limiting the area. During the earliest period of human history, the geographical characters of the area were different and the lowland and coastal areas of the present day were not formed. Moreover, within the area itself there were both favourable and unfavourable regions for human habitation. In connection with the location of living sites during earlier times geographical factors played a very significant role.

In understanding the geographical elements of the area concerned the problem should be viewed from anthropo-geographic setting. This will be useful to find out the relationship between man and geographical setting of

the area. Physiographic features have an important bearing with the culture, of all times and spaces. The living sites must fulfil a number of geographical, more especially physiographic, features as elevation of the land surface, water sources, availability of games and presence of raw materials for making tools. In view of these features the area of study can easily be located. In terms of political division the area of former greater Bengal will enlarge the scope and after Grierson (1906) on linguistic basis:

"The Bengali language also extends on the West into Chota Nagpur . . . below the plateau of Hazaribagh and Lohardaga. Its western boundary runs through the district of Singhbhum, and includes the whole district of Manbhum."

In fact, the western part of Bengal which merges with the Chotanagpur plateau is geographically favourable for earlier settlement and this is evident from the occurrence of sites in this region. In terms of physiography it is more apt to describe the region as the fringe of the Chotanagpur plateau.

The details of physiographic elements of Bengal, as one of the components of eastern India have been worked out by a number of scholars (Strickland, 1940; Chatterjee, 1949; Spate, 1954). One of the main geomorphological units, relevant for the present purpose, is the high plains of the old delta. In this division there are two major units, and they are old deltaic plain and piedmont plain. The old deltaic plain is found in the form a wide strip covering parts of the districts of Birbhum, Purulia, Burdwan, Bankura and Midnapur. The northern extremity of this unit enters into Bihar, more specifically in the Chotanagpur plateau. This physiographic unit was perhaps the only favourable area for earliest human settlement in Bengal and later with need and better capabilities of adaptation through culture the spatial coverage was extended.

The plains of the old delta are supposed to be composed of alluvium which was carried out from the upland and finally deposited in this area. The age of this deposit is not yet really known but in terms of geological time scale it has been attributed to Pleistocene epoch. A rough estimation of the Pleistocene epoch is between two million and ten thousand years before the present. The above figures indicate the lower and upper extremities respectively. The plains of the old delta are situated between the western tableland and the eastern Bengal basin. The thickness of the proper old delta plain varies between 500 and 1000 feet. Within the plain area there are low isolated hills in the form of monadnocks. The occurrence of such elevated areas are more in the west, and further west there are hill ranges.

It is interesting to note that the cultural debris were laid during the

Pleistocene period and it is revealed from the occurrence of cultural materials within the older alluvium. Moreover, the remains are found in higher levels of deposits—indicating their age as of later part of Pleistocene. Both from the landscape as well as the deposits some amount of information can be gathered about the area during the pre-Pleistocene and early Pleistocene periods. This wide area was initially low lying area which was covered by the alluvium deposits. The depositional activities were never continuous but were interrupted by drier climatic conditions. When the low lying area became relatively high, man came down and made temporary settlement over this region. Similar movements were made for a number of times and they are recorded in the sequence of early cultural periods. From the comparison of cultural traits of Bengal and the vicinity area in the west it may be deduced that Bengal served as the marginal area in the spread of culture. People entered into Bengal from the west and again returned into their original central area. This is perhaps due to the fact that during the contemporary period Bengal was not really stabilized with favourable situations for providing man with long and continuous settlement. Of course, later the conditions were changed and the area became more favourable for human habitation. Despite this Bengal never acted as an isolated culture area but served as one of the areas in major part of eastern India having a total culture. This is due to its geographical position and the involved characters.

#### *Man and culture through ages*

Not only Bengal, or greater Bengal but eastern India are completely devoid of skeletal remains of early man. In spite of this it may convincingly be said that man used to live in this region in the distant past. The absence of skeletal remains of early man may be explained and the probable reasons are: number of human population was less during early times, for the purpose of preservation of skeletal remains the local condition was unsuitable, and above all necessary explorations in search of human remains had hardly been carried out. Under the circumstance the only dependable information can be gathered from the cultural remains. Unlike all other animals, man is characterized by his capabilities of culture and in fact this criterion is a more important feature than the biological character for differentiating man from his forerunners even at the outset.

Cultural factors really cover a very wide area which pertain almost to everything related to man. But in case of man the most important and perhaps the crucial one is his livelihood, more especially the way of subsistence. In the beginning the pattern of human subsistence was perhaps in no way better than other animals. Man like all other animals used to live on gathering and collecting. The general pattern being same, the process of

gathering and collecting was somewhat different in case of man. Man is weaker than many animals and he is devoid of developed organs for offence and defence. This deficiency was replaced by his capability and capacity of culture. In reality the cultural factors have enabled man to make tools and their uses have made the survival mechanisms better and efficient.

In Indian context it is still an open question exactly when and how man emerged and started with his culture. But the earliest form of culture is present in the subcontinent of India as well as in Bengal. The earliest period is known as palaeolithic or old stone age when man used to make tools on stone. The specific functions of the tools are not really known but their forms, shapes, sizes and working areas indicate the speculative functions. From the tools and other associated assemblages it is revealed that the contemporary economy was in the form of gathering, collecting and hunting. The tools were made in such a way as to serve the purpose of digging, chopping, cutting, cleaving, scraping, etc. On the basis of functions (supposed?) the tools are classified into a number of groups, such as handaxe, chopper, cleaver, scraper etc. The sites of the palaeolithic period are found to be concentrated along the river valleys, which served as the constant sources of water and the river-borne pebbles were the most suitable and convenient forms of raw material.

In the beginning the tool making technology was very simple; the pebble on which the implement would be made was struck by another hard pebble in the form of a hammer stone, and a number of flakes were detached to get a working area or edge. Similar forms of tools were found to be continued for a long period of time but within the same period conspicuous development of tool forms and technical features are marked. It may be said that the basic economy did not make any major change but the process and implementations underwent thorough refinement. In Bengal, palaeolithic sites are found to occur in parts of the districts of Midnapur, Bankura and Purulia (Ball, 1868; Ghosh, 1961, 1962; Sen, Ghosh and Chatterji, 1963; Ghosh and Das, 1966). The nature of palaeolithic industry in Bengal includes two main systems of element, viz, Pebble-Core and Flake elements. Both the elements are based on identifiable form of raw material and technology involved in making the tools. The former element is earlier in date and the constituent types are: choppers, handaxes, cleavers and scrapers and in majority of the cases the tools were fashioned on pebbles or relatively bigger lumps of rocks, mostly quartzite and in cases quartz. Both the raw materials are very suitable tool making materials and they are locally available. In the adjoining area the Pebble-Core element has been divided into three chrono-cultural stages, as early, middle and late. Such periodization is not met with in Bengal, rather the assemblages of types are mixed in nature in which all the varieties

are simultaneously present. This is indicative of the fact that in this area people came later than the vicinity area, and the reason may be the pressure in subsistence level when the population increased and the resources were considerably exploited. These factors gave rise to search and exploration in new areas and the mobility set forth within the extended areas of geographical resemblances.

The next element, the Flake element, is later in date and this may be considered as the succeeding stage of the earlier element. This element is identified with the change of form of raw material, and instead of pebble or core the tools were made on flakes. In terms of technology this element is obviously more progressive. This was brought about by incessant development of technology on the one hand and on the other to cope with the need of more exploitation of resources. The relationship between Pebble-Core and Flake elements are marked by the presence of similar typology, though some new types as awls, knives, etc. came into being in the later stage. Another reason for this change may not be unlikely and that is due to environmental change. The Pebble-Core element had a long duration and they are found to be deposited in the beds of secondary laterite, indicating relatively wet condition. On the other hand the materials of Flake element is found from the junction level of secondary laterite deposit and overlying deposit of brown soil. The deposits from which two different sets of industrial elements are found belong to separate environmental events.

In Bihar and Orissa the final phase of palaeolithic period is marked by a third element, the Flake-Blade element (Ghosh, 1966) which is characterized by the addition of new technological and typological traditions. So far no sites belonging to that stage have yet been found from Bengal. Further exploitation was made possible with this new and developed tradition and intensive collection and gathering of food was possible which arrested the spread of people during this period. The network of movement of people was concentrated within an area and man for his comparatively superior technology of tool making was able to intensify his economic pursuits. The sizes of tools were diminished and the economy of raw material favoured him to make more tools on small amount of raw material. Further the movement of people was enhanced for lighter tool kit and new areas for procurement came into being. Under such a condition maximum attention was paid to favourable area and slightly unfavourable area was avoided. The absence of Flake-Blade element in Bengal points to the fact that throughout the palaeolithic period Bengal mostly served as the peripheral area of settlement and its affinity was mainly with areas lying in the west of it. In terms of man, the hypothesis would be same and the population in Bengal was more akin to the peninsular part of India.

In terms of geological time sequence there is a break when the Pleistocene period ended and the Holocene or Recent period set forth. In the context of pan-world, this shift has been dated within a time range between 7000 and 11000 years before the present. The exact date for Indian situation is still unknown. During the advent of the Recent period some amount of influence of the earlier Pleistocene period was retained, but with time the environmental condition was stabilized and more or less same environment is persisting during the present day. This is mostly due to convenient situation of this kind, the works on environmental reconstruction is somewhat easier. On the basis of environmental factors of the present day the sub-continent of India may be divided into a number of regions. Again within each region there are some sub-regions which are based on micro-characters. On the whole eastern India may broadly be included into one region, more especially from where the stone age industries have been unearthed. Within this broad region there are some sub-regions and the micro-characters are mainly the location of the areas in terms of geomorphology, as upland, plain, hillock and valley areas.

With the end of the Pleistocene period the palaeolithic stage came to an end, and the human groups came under the fold of the Recent period. Man of the Pleistocene epoch was extended into the next period through generations, in the same way the techno-typological traditions of culture were handed down. In this movement through time refinement or development of industries went on, but the basic economy, gathering-collecting, did not make any abrupt change. It has already been pointed out that Flake-Blade element, the industry of the final phase of palaeolithic culture, is not found in Bengal in flourishing condition but the next element belonging to the early part of the Recent period is found in Bengal covering an extensive area. This element has been termed by the present author as Blade-Bladelet element (Ghosh, 1972) which was considered earlier as microlithic industry (Lal, 1958) because the tools are diminutive in size. But on the basis of form of material it is apt to term the industry as Blade-Bladelet element. Majority of the types during this industrial phase were made on blade and bladelet. Moreover, mere size can be in no way the basic criterion of distinction. In fact, the trend of microlithism actually started in the preceding element.

Typology of Blade-Bladelet element includes a variety of types and all of them are not really new. Rather this element is an extension of the earlier element with some amount of alterations in techno-typological features and addition of new trait complexes. It is utterly impossible to develop the highly developed industrial traits of Blade-Bladelet element without any contextual background. During the Flake-Blade element in

eastern India the concentration was mostly in the west and it did not penetrate much in Bengal. In later period the spatial coverage was increased and the probable reasons are: increase of population, favourable climatic condition which was also stabilized in nature, technological development for exploitation of resources, etc. On the basis of above reasons it may also be assumed that the origin of Blade-Bladelet element might be somewhere in the plateau region and later the bearer of this element entered into Bengal. The evidence in favour of this argument is indirect in nature. In the vicinity of Sini, in south Bihar, the Blade-Bladelet element appears to be a derivative of Flake-Blade element (Ghosh, 1965) and the continuity of two elements indicates the process of developmental origin of Blade-Bladelet element. In Bengal the Flake-Blade element is absent so far which points to the fact that this element entered from the region round Sini.

The major form of material in Blade-Bladelet element is blade, mostly of smaller size and termed as bladelet. The production technology of bladelet is much more refined punch technique, and final workings are the resultant of precision pressure techniques. The major types are: knives, scrapers, burins, points etc., and all these types are also the constituent types of Flake-Blade element. Besides the above types some new types were introduced, such as lunate, triangle, trapeze, etc. Both from the type forms as well as the size it appears that these tiny tools were used in the form of composite tools with suitable hafting. This is still a deduction due to paucity of direct evidences, but some evidences have been found from other regions about the composite nature of tools. It deserves mention that a complete change-over of raw materials, from quartzite/quartz to colloidal silica was noticed in Blade-Bladelet element. In exceptional cases quartz was also used in making Blade-Bladelet tools when the most suitable materials were not locally available.

Unlike the former industries of the palaeolithic stage, the distribution of sites of Blade-Bladelet element is very wide. Sites of Blade-Bladelet element are found in almost all the regions of the fringe area of Chotanagpur plateau which comprises the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur. Moreover, at times the people also came further down from the plateau region. Sites yielding this industry are also found on hillocks. The distribution of varied nature in different geomorphological situations is really interesting. On the one hand this may be explained as the furtherance of adaptive mechanism in diverse ecological conditions and on the other the seasonal variations might have forced them to swing in different regions. Preliminary examination of typological materials at different sites, situated in varied geomorphological zones, does not show any variation of types, rather all the types are found in all the sites. But there are proportional differences



of types in sites of varied regions. In terms of function it would not be much different rather in all the sites the need of basic functions were present. But the functional requirements are not uniform in all the areas and the variations of the same differ from site to site, from one geomorphological region to other.

For necessary example three different sites may be taken into consideration which are situated in three geomorphological regions and they are: hillocks, elevated plateau and alluvial plain. The micro-environment in all these places are different, so also the ecological niches. In fact, the proportional differences of types indicate differential adaptive mechanisms in afore-said regions. The best illustration in this regard may be seen from the occurrence of blades which are found everywhere. But in terms of proportion, blades have the maximum occurrence in the elevated plateau region and they are least on the hillocks. Of course, the proportional differences caused by blades are compensated by other types. It may be assumed that in the livelihood blades had greater need in the region of elevated plateau and the same type was not much in use on the hillock sites. The livelihood pattern has a very important bearing with the available resources and the tool types were part and parcel of the implementation process of exploitation. It is obvious that the people were the same and this minor difference of industrial traits is mostly due to seasonal change.

The development of subsistence pattern is directly related to cultural progress. The basic necessity for survival is food, and the economic advancement is directed towards security and sufficiency in food. It is not unlikely that from the time of hunting and gathering stage man is always making endeavour to secure more food with a view to encountering the insecure situation. The exploitation of food resources was made to a considerable extent and the technological progress has helped him in intensive scale. Abundance of food has brought about increase in population and the balance between food and population can only be maintained if the surplus in food is continued. From the beginning of the palaeolithic period the proportional balance is maintained up to the Blade-Bladelet element, and with time gradually the gathering and collecting economy becoming both extensive and intensive. The optimum condition was reached during the end phase of Blade-Bladelet element. Human species would have faced critical crises if the revolutionary idea of agriculture did not emerge. In fact domestication of plants and animals saved man from probable extinction. Man had hardly any role in the process of domestication which is indeed a product of natural selection. Man's role in this regard is only the understanding of better varieties of plants and animals and further selection pressure was made by man. The whole circumstance of exhaustion of food—increase of population is one



of the main factors responsible for the same—and evolution of domesticated forms of plants and animals may be considered as a very important coincidence.

This phase of food producing economy is different from food gathering-collecting level which was in vogue for a very long time. This new economy made a complete change-over on technological aspects and the stone tools were fashioned and fabricated in different ways. The main techniques of this stage, which appeared for the first time, are chipping, grinding and polishing with which different functions were served. It is true that earlier economy was not completely abundant and the economy was a mixed one. This stage with new economy, technology and livelihood and above all the culture is termed as neolithic. The economy of new form also brought about a complete change-over in the socio-cultural milieu of the contemporary people.

The neolithic stage of an area actually depends on the presence of food producing economy, and where this economy is prevailing the tool types would be neolithic, i.e., provided with chipping, grinding and polishing technology. On the basis of the presence of neolithic tool types the neolithic sites are found to occur in different areas of Bengal, and they are Darjeeling and Kalimpong (Walsch, 1904), Bankura (Chakladar, 1941, 1942), Midnapur (Sen, 1948; Ghosh, 1961) and Purulia (Krishnaswami, 1959-60). All these finds are surface finds but the associated materials point them to neolithic. Almost similar tool types, especially celts, have also been found from other areas as Bangarh (Goswami, 1948), just below Sunga level. Reports of some more neolithic (?) tools are available from Bengal, but sheer presence of isolated finds are useless. In this connection, mention may be made about the finds from Chittagong district (Brown, 1917) and Dani (1960) includes this area within the greater Assam area.

Like the earlier industries the neolithic industry has a greater affinity with the neolithic industry of Bihar and Orissa, and both Dani (1960) and Krishnaswami (1962) have considered Bihar, Orissa and Bengal as a single culture area. But along with this it may be added that in Bengal the neolithic culture was later in date and it is supposed that people with neolithic economy entered into Bengal from west, from Bihar, where the neolithic sites are numerous and the assemblages of finds are really meaningful. Moreover, the maximum concentration of sites are found to occur in the region of Midnapur, Bankura and Purulia. It has already been mentioned that neolithic sites in Bengal are few, not only that the materials are so scanty that the sites may hardly be attributed to sites in the proper sense. The material remains are so scarce in Bengal that simply on the basis of the occurrence of tool types, whose relevant contexts are mostly missing, it is hardly possible to

assign this complex as true neolithic. Moreover, no attempts have yet been made by the scholars to throw light on this problem area of research and they themselves even did not point out the basic problems involved in it. From author's own experience it is perhaps essential to mention that the so-called earlier neolithic sites in Bengal are favourable for agricultural activities. It may further be assumed that the early form of agriculture was not settled and this part of Bengal was included in the territory of band(s) of neolithic community.

On the problem of agriculture in Bengal, rice draws special attention in this context. There are 23 major varieties (species) of rice of which 21 are wild and 2 are cultivated (Chatterjee, 1948). Out of the two cultivated forms only *Oryza sativa* and nine wild varieties are found in India. About the origin of cultivated rice it is thought that it took place in south India (De Condolle, 1886; Watt, 1892). Some scholars think that the centre of the origin of cultivated rice was in Bengal (Kagwa, 1973). The archaeological remains do not agree with the latter idea, while the botanical remains are not in favour of considering south India as the centre of origin. It may be possible that the real centre was in between, and Ramiah and Ghose (1951) propose the area as the Jeypur tract on the borders of Madras and Orissa. This hypothesis also fits in with the available evidences of archaeological sites, the ideas of diffusion of agriculture and neolithic traits.

In the context of history, neolithic is a turning point in all forms. But due to paucity of relevant data this stage is almost unknown. Even the typology of neolithic artifacts is only concentrated to celts, either axes or adzes, and neither specific neolithic tool types nor the continuation of earlier types are virtually present. Under the circumstance, even the speculative history of the region during neolithic period is difficult to reconstruct.

In the generalized historical sequence of culture, after neolithic there was the metal stage and at the outset the metal stage is devoid of any written documents. This is one of the reasons for which the early metal stage is considered as belonging to protohistoric period—again a vague terminology. The first find of a copper shouldered celt was recovered from Tamajuri, a village in northwest Midnapur (Anderson, 1833). The geographical area is the fringe area of Chotanagpur plateau where there is the rich deposit of copper ore (Dunn, 1937). Pandu Rajar Dhibi, in north Burdwan, appears to be an important site and it has been said that there is a succession of copper and iron stages and in both stages the lithic elements are persisting (Dasgupta, 1964). It has been suggested (Mukherjee, 1966) that there are four major cultural periods, of which Period I is pre-metallic and contains stone and bone tools along with pottery. Necessary descriptions of the tools are lacking while the pottery has been unnecessarily classified. From the

evidence of husk impression on pottery earlier suggestion has been made on the cultivation of rice (Ghosh and Chakrabarti, 1968) but this is too sweeping because the identification of species from husk impression or from husk used as tempering material is seldom possible.

Period II belongs to metal stage, especially of copper. Copper objects recovered from the site are: ring, nail-parer, spiral bangle and ordinary bangle. Along with copper objects stone tools, belonging to Blade-Bladelet tradition, and bone tools are associated. According to conventional archaeological tradition pottery was given undue attention and pottery classification was made on the primary basis of colour which has least to do with cultural tradition. Iron occurs only in a certain level of Period III, and the concept of periodization is ambiguous. Iron objects comprise only knife and 'several iron objects', and the assemblage includes stone implements, both of Blade-Bladelet tradition and of neolithic, and copper objects. Period IV merges with the historical period. It is highly surprising that more than a decade has passed after the excavation of this important site which is crucial for linking the unrecorded and recorded parts of history, but except an incomplete account in Bengali the responsibility of communicating the information to interested scholars has not been fulfilled yet.

Mahisdal in Birbhum is another important site where the amount of work is little in comparison to above mentioned site. At Mahisdal there are two major periods. Period I is characterized by the presence of stone tools of Blade-Bladelet tradition, bone tools, terracotta objects and pottery. Charred rice may be considered as one of the important finds indicating the dietary intake. In course of a reconnoitring survey in the area, the author accompanied by Dr. D. K. Chakrabarti found a small polished celt—probably the specimen is coming out from the level of Period I. More or less the cultural tradition of Period I was continued in the successive phase of Period II in which the diagnostic trait was iron, in the form of tools as arrow heads, spear heads, chisels, nails, and iron and iron slags. Two more sites of similar cultural phase which deserve mention are Nanur and Haraipur. Despite the presence of such sites the history of the area during the metal stage is meagre and disarticulated.

The distribution of sites with the occurrence of early metal implements, both of copper and iron, may be explained in terms of geographical situation of the area. The same area was inhabited since the palaeolithic period and the area itself served as the marginal area of a bigger cultural area favourable for human habitation. It is probable that for migratory bands the area in Bengal was considerably suitable for temporary settlement and further east of the area in Bengal the situation was unfavourable and the people re-entered into the western part, in Bihar and Orissa. In case of neolithic stage

the migratory habit was not ruled out and at times the area in Bengal was included in the cyclic movement. In course of time man passed through a number of stages of technological development and adaptive mechanism was improved and stabilization in settlement is gradually achieved. The basic core of human history in this part is situated in the Chotanagpur plateau which is favourable in all possible ways. Metallurgy both of copper and iron might have inaugurated in this part which is evident from the occurrence of ores of both the metals. It is true that metallurgy is a specialised craft and the metal tools were relatively rare because they were expensive. Metal tools were either procured by the people of Bengal from western part or the specialists used to move with their kits and extraction of metals and production of tools were made at the site. This is evident from the rarity of metal tools and the presence of iron slags.

Relatively isolated and remote villages of the present day in the area under discussion still reveal the livelihood of the unrecorded historical period. The same area is also populated by tribals who also came down from the Chotanagpur plateau. The physical features of the people who used to live in this area during the time under consideration and their affinity with other living groups are not yet known. Skeletal remains of early metal stages have been unearthed and the results of examination and analysis of these finds will throw light on the ethnic problem. The author feels that the tribals are the vestiges of earlier population without major cultural and biological change for their socio-cultural tradition which is mostly static and they prefer avoiding the factors responsible for change. The oral history of tribals may serve as useful materials for understanding the unrecorded history of Bengal, and its relationship with conventional recorded history.

### *Epilogue*

May I be allowed a personal reminiscence? Very recently in a meeting of the archaeologists, I met Professor Niharranjan Ray (for the first time) who was disappointed with the deliberations of archaeologists who were dealing with an archaeology devoid of man. My feeling with the meeting was exactly the same and I expressed that Indian archaeology requires to be anthropologically oriented. I myself make attempt to understand early human history through palaeoanthropology. It is mainly with the palaeoanthropological methods I have endeavoured to place the unrecorded period of history of Bengal with a view to considering this as the prelude to Professor Ray's outstanding contribution on the History of the Bengalees. In terms of historical perspective the development of the history of Bengal is uneven in nature, but the progress is homotaxial with the core area and the primitive background played an important role in the growth pattern.

# HISTORY AND SOCIETY

## REFERENCES

- ANDERSON, C. W. 1833. *Catalogue and handbook of the archaeological collections in the Indian museum*. Calcutta.
- BALL, V. 1868. *Jungle life in India*. London.
- BROWN, J. COGGIN. 1917. *Catalogue of prehistoric antiquities in the Indian museum*. Calcutta.
- CHAKRADAR, H. C. 1941. The prehistoric culture of Bengal I. *Man in India* 21: 208-236.
- 1942. The prehistoric culture of Bengal II. *Man in India* 22: 140-162.
- CHATTERJEE, D. 1948. A modified key and enumeration of the species of *Oryza* Linn. *Indian Journal of Agricultural Science* 18: 185.
- Chatterjee, S. P. 1949. *Bengal in maps*. Calcutta.
- DANI, N. H. 1960. *Prehistory and protohistory of eastern India*. Calcutta.
- DANIEL, Glyn. 1962. *The ideas of prehistory*. Harmondsworth.
- DASGUPTA, P. C. 1964. *The excavations at Pandu Rajar Dhibi*. Calcutta.
- DE CONDOLLE. 1866. *Origin of cultivated plants*. London.
- DUNN, J. A. 1937. The mineral deposits of eastern Singhbhum and surrounding areas. *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India* 69.
- GHOSH, ASOK K. 1961. Prehistoric studies in eastern India. *Science and Culture* 27: 369-375.
- 1962. Discovery of prehistoric stone implements from northwest Midnapur, West Bengal. *Science and Culture* 28: 338-339.
- 1965. Comments on "Mesolithic phase in the prehistory of India" by V. N. Misra. in *Indian Prehistory: 1964*. Edited by V. N. Misra and M. S. Matc, pp. 80-81. Poona: Deccan College.
- 1966. "Implementiferous laterite in eastern India" in *Studies in prehistory—Robert Bruce Foote memorial volume*. Edited by D. Sen and Asok K. Ghosh, pp. 149-162. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay.
- GHOSH, ASOK K. AND RANJAN DAS. 1966. Palaeolithic industries of West Bengal. *Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute* 5(182): 83-93.
- GHOSH, ASOK K. AND DILIP KUMAR CHAKRABARTI. 1968. Prehistoric metal stage in West Bengal. *Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute* 7(182): 112-123.
- GHOSH, ASOK K. 1972. "Flake and Flake-Blade industries in India in the context of human evolution", in *The origin of Homo sapiens*. Edited by F. Bordes, pp. 95-100. Paris: Unesco.
- GOSWAMI, K. G. 1948. *Excavations at Bangarh*. Calcutta.
- GRIERSON, G. A. 1906. *Linguistic survey of India*. Calcutta.
- KAGAWA, MITSUO. 1973. Primitive agriculture in Japan—latest Jomon agricultural society and means of Production. *Asian Perspectives* 16(1): 1-15.
- KRISHNASWAMI, V. D. 1959-1960, in *Indian Archaeology—a Review*, p. 48.
- 1962. *The neolithic pattern of India*. *Ancient India* 16: 25-64.
- LAL, B. B. 1958. Birbhanpur, a microlithic site in the Damodar valley, West Bengal. *Ancient India* 14: 4-48.
- MUKHERJEE, S. C. 1966. *Protohistory of West Bengal—exploring Bengal's past*. Calcutta.
- RAMIAH, K. AND R. L. M. GHOSE. 1951. Origin and distribution of cultivated plants of south Asia—rice. *Indian Journal of Genetics and Plant Breeding* 11(1): 7-13.
- RAY, NIHARRANJAN. 1949. *Bangalir Itihas* (in Bengali). Calcutta.
- SEN, D. 1948. A note on some celts and chisels from West Bengal. *Science and Culture* 14: 252-253.
- SEN, D., ASOK K. GHOSH AND MANJU CHATTERJEE. 1963. Palaeolithic industry of Bankura. *Man in India* 43(2): 100-113.
- SPATE, O. H. 1954. *India and Pakistan—a general and regional geography*. London: Methuen.
- STRICKLAND, C. 1940. *Deltaic formations*. Calcutta.
- WALSCH, E. H. C. 1904. A note on stone implements in the Darjeeling district. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 73(3): 20-24.
- WATT, G. 1892. *Dictionary of economic product in India* 5: 498.

## **IV MEDIAEVAL INDIA**



# An Early Arab Report on Indian Religious Sects

A. B. M. HABIBULLAH

IN 988 A.D. a bookseller of Baghdad, named Abul Faraj Muhammad b. Ishaque al-Nadim, the *warraq* (copyist), compiled, possibly for the use of his customers, which could be truly described as a classified and annotated bibliography of books of all nations, Arabs and foreigners alike, which are in the Arabic language and script extant in his time, with a brief description of the sciences comprised in each class. It was more than bibliography, in fact, for it contained information about the authors, their classes, together with their genealogies, dates of birth, length of their times, time of their death, places to which they belonged, their merits and their faults; since the beginning of every science that has been invented down to the present epoch, namely 377 of the Hijra.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the writings listed in the *Fihrist* or Index, as it is called by the author did not survive the cataclysmic events of the Mongol eruption and the sack of Baghdad in 1258. The *Fihrist* is therefore our only record of the intellectual output in Arabic language up to the 10th century.

Of its ten discourses, or *Maqalahs* the last four cover what is called non-Islamic subjects, containing a "register of the books of the old sciences composed by Greeks, Persians, and Indians, of which there exist translations in the Arabic language and script." These sections are more elaborate than the preceding ones in that brief descriptions of the various sciences—philosophy, religion, mathematics, chemistry, music, astronomy, mechanics, and medicine, etc.,—are prefixed to most of the topics. Among these, Section Two of *Maqalah* nine, deals with the religion and sects of Hind (the term used is *al-Hind* denoting both the people and the country).

This account is important not only because it predates the great Al-Beruni who was only a young boy when this was written, but also because it reproduces an earlier report on India prepared by an emissary specially sent



by Yahya b. Khaled, the Barmekide wazir of the Abbaside Caliph Harun al-Rashid<sup>2</sup> (786–809 A.D.). This report, Ibn Nadim says, he read in the handwriting of the famous philosopher, Yaqub b. Ishaq al-Kindi, 'letter by letter'. It was transcribed on the third Muharram, 249 A.H./863 A.D. . Al-Kindi died in c. 260/873 A.D. while Yahya b. Khaled Barmeki was Harun's wazir from 786 to 803 A.D., dying two years after his fall from power in 805 A.D. Who the author of this report was Ibn Nadim could not ascertain.

The report does not appear to have been informed with any understanding of the principles or philosophy underlying the facts stated—a quality which marked the account of Alberuni or even the account of the 11th century writer Shahrastani.<sup>3</sup> Even so, the report being the earliest extant Arab account of Hindu religious sects, deserves more attention than it has received so far, for it appears to have formed the core around which subsequent writers like Mutahhar b. 'Tahir Maqdisi,<sup>4</sup> Buzurg b. Shahriyar,<sup>5</sup> and Shahrastani elaborated their accounts of Hindu religious practices and beliefs. Such elaborations, of course, draw on details obtained from other travellers or stray contacts with Indians. These details sometimes give valuable additional information, although their sources are not as a rule mentioned. Ibn Nadim, however, is an exception; in reproducing the report of the Barmekide emissary he supplements it with additional details, and even variants, for which he cites authorities by name. One of such informants was the well-known poet, traveller and mineralogist, Abu Dulaf Mishar b. Muhalhil<sup>6</sup> whom the author of the *Fihrist* calls a 'globe-trotter' and was a personal friend. Another was a Christian Priest from Najran whom he met in Istambul in 377 A.H. The priest had led a deputation of Christians to China and had returned overland after six years, all his companions having died meanwhile.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper I propose to give a translation of this report together with the information that Ibn Nadim has obtained from other sources. He does not reproduce the report in a continuous passage but interpolates, more than once, additional details or variant information from other sources which he names. Such interpolated passages however are clearly recognizable as he always begins by mentioning the source.

The account of Indian religious sects is prefaced with a short note by Ibn Nadim which reads:

"In a sheaf (of manuscripts) whose content is reproduced here I read a book in which there were described the religious sects of Hind and her religion. This book was copied from a book which was transcribed on Friday, 3rd of Muharram in the year 249 A.H. I do not know who the author of the report reproduced in the book was, except that I saw 'letter by letter' in the handwriting of Yaqub b. Ishaq al-Kindi. Under this report which is reproduced here, were the following words in the handwriting of the copyist:

'Some theologians have related that Yahya b. Khaled al Barmeki sent an emissary to Hind to bring him some medicinal herbs available there and also to prepare for him a book on the religions of the Hindus. So this book was written for him'. Muhammad b. Ishaq (Ibn-Nadim) says that during the Arab rule the persons who distinguished themselves most by their interest in matters relating to Hind were Yahya b. Khaled and the Barmeki family; it was their initiative and interest in India which was responsible for bringing (to Baghdad) their learned men, physicians and philosophers".<sup>8</sup>

The main report begins:

"Names of places of worship in the land of Hind, descriptions of the temples (idol-houses) and account of the idols.

"The biggest temple is the house of Mankir whose length is one *farsakh*. Mankir is a city within the possession of Balhara.<sup>9</sup> Its length is forty *farsakh* (and there are) plane trees, canals and varieties of wood. It is said that in that city there are for the ordinary people one million elephants which carry the merchandise. In the king's stable there are sixty thousand elephants and for (the defence of) the fortresses there are one hundred and sixty thousand elephants. In this temple there are about twenty thousand idols made of a variety of precious metals like gold, silver, iron, brass, copper and ivory and various carved stones mounted with shaped and artistically worked precious jewels. The king rides towards this temple; in truth he walks towards this idol-house and rides back. In that house is an idol whose height is twelve cubits and is placed on a throne of gold in the centre of a golden cupola, the whole of which is set with jewels like white pearl, ruby, sapphire, blue and emerald stones. They sacrifice animals before this idol and there are many who offer their own body as sacrifice on a particular day in the year known to them.

"The idol house of Multan: It is said that this is one of the seven (great) idol-houses (of the world).<sup>10</sup> In it is an idol of iron seven cubits in height (placed) in the middle of a cupola which is attracted on all sides with equal force by magnetic stones. It is said that the idol leans on one side because of an accident which had occurred in it. This temple is on the foot of a mountain and the house is a tower (Qubba, dome, cupola) one hundred and eighty cubits in height to which Hindus come on pilgrimage on land and water from the furthest ends of the country. The route to it from Balkh is on a straight line because the horizon of Multan is in correspondence with that of Balkh. On the mountain caves and on the lower slopes are houses for the worshippers and ascetics; and also there are places for the sacrifices and offerings. It is said that the place is never empty for a moment from pilgrims.

"They have two other idols: one is called 'Junbukt' and the other 'Zunbukt'.<sup>11</sup> They have fashioned their likenesses from (mountains on) the

two sides of a wide valley and the height of each one of these is eighty cubits and which can be seen from a great distance. The Hindus come on pilgrimage to them and carry offerings, incense and perfumes. As the pilgrim sights the two idols from a great distance he is obliged to cast himself on the ground out of respect for them, and if his attention is diverted from them or if he forgets to do so (prostrating himself) while looking at it he must return to the place from where he cannot see them and there he should prostrate himself on the ground and approach them in that manner. This is out of respect for the idols. One who had witnessed these idols told me (Ibn Nadim?) that near (in front of) them the pilgrim sheds much blood and it is believed that often as many as fifty thousand or more happen to sacrifice their lives before these idols. Allah knows best.

"The Hindus have a temple at Bamian which is on the approaches to India adjacent to Sijistan. Yaqub b. Lais<sup>12</sup> had reached this place when he started on his expedition for the conquest of Hind, and the idols, which were sent to the *Madinatus-salam* (Baghdad) were from that place in Bamian. And this idol-house of Bamian is a great temple and is visited by ascetics and worshippers. In this temple are idols of gold adorned with jewels whose value is beyond calculation, and which no praise or description can approximate. Hindus come to it on pilgrimage over land and water from the farthest corners of the country. And within the confines of the 'House of Gold' (Multan) is a temple. About this there is a difference of opinion. One group says it is a house of stone in which there are idols. It is named House of Gold (Baituz-zahab) because when the Arabs conquered this place during the rule of Hajjaj b. Yusuf they obtained from it one hundred 'bahars' of gold in weight.<sup>13</sup> Abu Dulaf (Yanbuii) who made frequent visits (to these parts) told me (Ibn Nadim) that this is not the House (temple) which is known as the House of Gold (Baituz-zahab).

"There is a temple in the desert in the country of Makran and Qandahar which is visited only by ascetics and worshippers of Hind. It is made of gold, seven cubits long and of the same width and its height is twelve cubits. It is set with diverse kinds of jewels. It is an idol made of (? set with) ruby and other wonderfully precious stones and ornamented with magnificent pearls of the size of bird's egg or even bigger. He (Abu Dulaf) said that a reliable person from among the people of Hind informed him that (even though) rain collects on the roof of the temple, on its right and on its left, yet no damage is caused to it; similarly flood waters swirl on its right and left (but the temple remains undamaged). Abu Dulaf said: some one from among the Hindus told me that whoever looks at it and if he is ailing from whatever ailment it might be, God of the Exalted Name cures him. He (Abu Dulaf) said 'when I argued with him on this point he (the Hindu informer) disagreed with me'.

Some of the Brahmins told me (Abu Dulaf) that it (the idol) is suspended between heaven and earth without any support and without any rope or string.

"Abu Dulaf told me that the Hindus have a 'House' at Qumar (Khmer, Kamboj, Cambodia) whose walls are of gold and the roof is of alo-wood and the height of each (pillar of) wood is fifty cubits or more, the idols, niches, and corners of worship are all adorned with magnificent pearls and large rubies. He (Abu Dulaf) said 'some one who is very reliable among them told me that in the 'Madinatus-Sanf' they have an idol house and that this house is old; that all the idols that there are (in this house) speak (as oracles) to the worshippers and answer them on whatever they are asked.' Abu Dulaf said 'during the time I was in the country of Hind there was a king who ruled over 'Sanf' called 'Lajin'.' A Christian monk (however) told me (Ibn Nadim) that a king at present time, known as 'Luqin' attacked 'Sanf', destroyed it and subjugated all its inhabitants.'"14

*Discourse on the 'Budd'*

(This is from a writing other than what was in the handwriting of Kindi)

"The Hindus have different views about it. One group held that it (the 'budd') is the image of the creator, High is His honour. Another group said it is the form of His messenger among the mankind. At this point also they have disagreement. One section held that the messenger is one of the angels; another held that the messenger is an angel from among the angels; another group holds that the messenger is a man from the mankind; another group says he is one of the demons. Yet another section held that it (the idol) is the image of the philosopher 'Budarf' (*Bodhisattva*) who came to them from God, of the exalted name. For each of these groups among them (Hindus) there are rules (rituals) of worshipping and venerating their idols. A truthful person among them has related that for each of their sects there is a particular form of the idol to which they repair in worship, and that 'Budd' ('Buddat' or idols) is the name used for idols in general and the images are the particular form of the deity (*Asnam*). The descriptions (iconography) of the biggest 'Budd' (idol) is a man seated on the throne, no hair on his face, chin lowered and on the lips something like a smile, second and third fingers of one hand closed. A reliable person said that at each day's journey (station) there is an image of this 'Budd' made of different kinds of material according to the means of the person, either of gold decorated with a variety of jewels, silver, or copper or stone or even of wood. They worship him as they approach him from the front, whether from the East to the West or from the West to the East. But most of them keep the East behind (the image) so that they approach him facing the East. It is said that they have an image of this idol with four faces which they have constructed with precise mathematical accuracy, so

that from whichever direction they approach him they see his full face and complete profile, nothing being concealed at all from them. It has been said that the appearance of the idol which is in Multan is this . . . ."<sup>18</sup>

The report of the Barmekide emissary as read by Ibn Nadim in the handwriting of Alkindi (is now resumed):

"The *Mahakalia* : 'They have an idol named *Mahakal*. It has four hands, sky-blue in colour, thick, long and abundant hair on the head, white teeth, bare belly, over its back the hide of an elephant with blood dripping, hide of the two legs of the elephant tied up in front, on one hand a huge serpent with open mouth, on the other a stick, the third hand holding a human head which has just been severed with the fourth hand; on its ears two serpents coiled like earrings, and on its body two serpents coiled around; on its head a crown of bones of human skulls and a garland of human skulls on the neck. It is supposed to be a demon from among the devils to whom obedience is due because of its great power and because of his praise-worthy and desirable qualities as well as undesirable and repulsive nature, like bestowing gifts and withholding them, as also granting favours and causing pain. For the Hindus he is a reliever from hardship.

"Among them is a sect (known as) the '*Dinkitiah*'.<sup>19</sup> They are worshippers of the sun. They have an image for him on a carriage (chariot) drawn by four horses; on the hand of the image is a jewel, the colour of fire. They assert that the sun is the king of the angels who deserves worship and prostrations. So they prostrate themselves before this idol and circumambulate around him with burning incense, blossoming flowers and stringed instrumental music. For this idol there are attendants and revenue assigned (for the expenses); there are high priests and guardians, and officers to manage its affairs, look after the servants and conduct the ceremonial worship three times a day for which they strike the bell at fixed times. To this idol come the sick, the leper and those afflicted with palsy, white leprosy and other chronic diseases of a disgusting nature. They stand before him, stay awake the whole night, prostrate, entreat and pray to the idol to cure them (of their afflictions) and they do not eat or drink and fast in front of the idol; the sick remain in this condition until they see in dream as if some one tells them 'you are cured; and your wish is fulfilled'. It is said the idol speaks to the sick man in his sleep and he gets cured and returns to health.

"Among them is a sect '*Chandrihkiniah*' (? *Chanrabaktiya*). They are worshippers of the moon. They say the moon one of the angels and reverence and worship is due to it. Their custom is that they make an idol seated on a carriage drawn by four swans; on the hand of the image is a jewel named '*chandrakil*'(?). It is a part of their religious duties that on the (fourteenth day) of every month they worship and prostrate before the idol and fast;

they do not break the fast until the moon rises; then they bring food, wine and milk to the idol and having made some secret wish they look at the moon and ask for its fulfilment. On the appearance of the new moon and on the fourteenth day of the month when the moon is full they ascend to the roofs of their houses and gaze at it; burn incense, reciting prayers (*mantras*) all the while and make a wish. Then they come down to enjoy the food, wine, music and make merry, and they do not look at it again except on auspicious occasions and on the day of the full moon. After breaking their fast they engage in dance, and games and instrumental music in front of the idol and of the moon.

"Among them is also a sect of the '*Anashaniya*', that who refrain from food and drink.

"Within this sect is a sub-sect called '*Bakrantaniah*' (*Bakrintiniah* ?)"<sup>17</sup> that is to say those who fasten themselves in iron. Their custom is to shave the head and beard, keep the body absolutely bare except the private parts. It is not their custom to teach or converse with any one until he enters their sect. Those who do so are ordered to give alms with humility; but the new recruit is not required to fasten himself in iron until he attains the status or rank which would entitle him to do this. Reason for fastening themselves in iron around their middle up to the chest is their apprehension that their bellies might burst, on account, as they believe, of their great learning and excessive wisdom (contemplative power).

"Another sect among them is '*Gangayatrah*'. Its members are spread all over the land of Hind. Among their custom is that if they commit a great sin he is pointed out (by others, that is, ostracised or outcast) from far and near until he bathes in the river 'Gang' by which he is purified.

"They have another sect called '*Rahmariya*' (or '*Rajmartiya*' ?)."<sup>18</sup> They are followers of the king. A custom of their religion is to assist and serve the king. They say 'God has made him king, and if we are killed in obeying and serving him we go to heaven'.

"They have another sect whose custom is to lengthen the hair, plait and arrange it over the face and all round the head thus covering it completely. It is their rule not to drink intoxicants. They make pilgrimage to a particular mountain called 'jur-an' (?). When they return from this pilgrimage they do not enter any inhabited place on the way which they avoid; if they see a woman they flee from her. On this mountain to which they go on pilgrimage is a great 'House' (temple) in which is an image."<sup>19</sup>

It would seem that either Ibn Nadim did not reproduce the Report in full or that al-Kindi's manuscript did not contain the full text, for subsequent writers like Mutahhar b. Tahir Maqdisi, Hamza Isfahani<sup>20</sup> and Shahrastani<sup>21</sup> give additional information which appear to have been obtained, substan-

tially from the same source. None of these writers ever visited India. I hope to discuss this in another paper.

One other point needs to be mentioned here. It is surprising that while Ibn Nadim mentions Arabic works either translated from Persian or originally written in Arabic script on what has been established as the legend of Buddha and his renunciation, like the *Kitabul Budd*, *Kitab Budasaf O Balohar*. *Kitab Budasf Mufarad*<sup>22</sup> he mentions the Buddhists (called *Samaniyah*, like the Persians, after 'Sraman') not as an Indian religion but one of those of Khurasan and Transoxiana before Islam. The traditional legend of Gautam Buddha's birth and renunciation, although found in nuclear form in the *Kitab Budasf O Balohar*, had in its travel through the Soghdian-Buddhist texts, Manichaeic adaptations, early Persian versified fragments and later into Arabic verse and prose by anonymous writers that it is no surprise that even al-Beruni was not aware of the legend having originated in India and so he connected '*Budasf*' with the Sabceans.<sup>23</sup> Ibn Nadim however does not confuse '*Budd*' (idol) with '*Budasf*' as some of the Arab travellers had done, but in the following brief account summarises some of the teachings of Buddha.

"The religion of the *Samaniyas*.

"I read in the handwriting of a man from Khurasan who has compiled an account of ancient Khurasan and of the developments that have taken place there in recent times (Hamza Isfahani?). This manuscript resembles the Dastur. It says 'the prophet of the *Samaniyas* is '*Budasf*'; most of the people of Transoxiana were in this religion before Islam and in ancient times. Meaning of Samaniya is connected with the Samani and they are the most generous (sect) in the world and among the various religions. That is because their prophet '*Budasf*' taught them the vilest conduct which is forbidden and which no one should believe in or act upon is to say 'no' in any action whatsoever. So they act on this directive in word and in deed. To say 'no' is to them the conduct of the devil (*shaitan*) and their religion is to drive away the devil".<sup>24</sup>

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> *Kitabul Fihrist*, ed. G. Flugel. Leipzig, 1871, p. 2. The passage is translated in Nicholson: *Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge 1941, 346; Brown, E. G.: *Literary History of Persia*, I, 384, has an index of the subjects dealt with in the *Fihrist*.

<sup>2</sup> As is now known, '*Barmak*' is the Arabicised '*Paramukh*', high priest of the Buddhist vihar of Balkh. Sulaiman Nadvi: *Arab O Hind ke taalluqat*, 116-118, cites the geographer Ibnul Faqih (4th/11th century) for a story from the *Kitabul Buldan*, about the conversion of the Paramukh when Balkh was conquered in the reign of the Caliph Uthmān when he was taken to Damascus and who on his return was killed along with his ten sons for his apostacy at the instigation of the Buddhist Turkish king of Turkestan, his wife fleeing with her youngest son to Kashmir where he learnt the sciences and religion of his forefathers, this young man eventually returning to Balkh whose people had resumed their original faith. The undoubted fact is that after the conquest of Balkh the last Paramukh, whose family owned extensive landed property around the city, migrated to lower Iraq and settled as a client to an Arab tribe where



Yahya's father Khaleel was the first to be converted to Islam towards the end of the Umayyad period when he joined the Alide movement and thus came into prominence in the time of the first Abbaside Caliph al-Saffar. He was appointed to important positions which enabled him to function practically as the *wazir*. For Yahya's interest in and patronage to Indological studies see Nadvi, op. cit. 137 sq.

<sup>8</sup> Abul Fath Muhammad b. Abdul Karim Shahrastani (1086-1153), *Kitabul Milal wal Nihal*, ed. W. Cureton, London 1846, reprint in one Volume, Leipzig 1923. (References in this paper are to the Leipzig edition.)

A summary translation was published by E. A. Rehatsek in the Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. XIV, 1878-80, pp. 27-69.

<sup>9</sup> Mutahhar b. Tahir Maqdisi (c. 985 A.D.): *Kitab ul Bad'c wal Tarikh*, ed. Cl. Huart Paris, 1899-1919, 6 vols. The fourth volume contains a chapter on Indian religion. This volume was not available to me but Nadvi, op. cit. 207-210, 220-221, quotes extracts in Urdu translation.

<sup>10</sup> Buzurg b. Shahriyar, a Persian sea captain (c. 10th century): *Kitab Ajaibul Hind*, ed. with a French translation by Van der Lith and M. Devic. Leiden, 1883-86 (relevant quotations in Nadvi, op. cit. 226).

<sup>11</sup> Of his two booklets (*risalah*) dealing with his travels in the Uighur country, Persia and places on the west Indian coast and trading posts in the Indian ocean as far as the isthmus of Kra (called Kara by the Arabs) sometime in the middle of the tenth century. Ibn Nadim, Ya'qut (Mu'jamul Buldan, ed. Wustenfeld, Leipzig 1866, 6 vols) and Zakariya Qazwini (*Asarul Bilad wa Ahkbanul Ibad*, ed. Wustenfeld) quote substantial portions; extracts from the latter translated in *E & D*, I, 95-99; original text of one of the two *risalahs* printed by Minorsky: *Abu Dulaf's travels in Iran*, Cairo, 1954. Scholars, however, have expressed reservation about the actuality of Abu Dulaf's travels in some of the countries he claims to have visited; see Minorsky: *La deuxième risala d'Abu Dulaf in Oriens*, 1952.

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Nadim, op. cit. 347.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 345.

<sup>14</sup> If 'Ballhara', as is now established, stands for Vallabha-Raja (or Vallaharaya) the regnal title of the Rashtrakuta emperors of the Deccan from the middle of the 8th to the third quarter of the 10th century, whose titles usually included Vallabha (Prithvivivallabha, Kalivallabha, Srivallabha, Atisayavallabha etc.) Mankir must refer to Manyakheta the capital city, now represented by the village of Malkher 90 miles east of Sholapur. *HGIP*, IV, 2-10. The Arab report that the 'balharas' used to reign 40/50 years because of their friendly treatment of the Arabs must have originated in the popular mind because of the long reign of King Sarva or Anoghavarsha (814-878) who was particularly noted for the honour and protection he accorded to the Arab merchants: Masudi, op. cit. 74.

<sup>15</sup> The 'seven famed idol houses of worship' known to the early Arabs are listed in Masudi, *Murujuz-Zahab* ed. Bulag, Egypt, 1303 AD. 260-261. i. The 'house' of Kaaba before Islam, ii. a 'House' on the top of a hill three miles from Isfahan called 'Mars' (?) where there were idols which were cleared by king Gurshasp when he accepted the religion of Zoroaster and turned it into a fire-temple which is sacred to the 'Magians' up to now; iii. a 'House' called 'Sindusab' (?) in Hind in which there is an idol 'drawn by magnets placed on all sides keeping it suspended in the air without any support; it is a famous temple in Hind; iv. Naubahar, built by Minuchihir in Balkh in Khurasan, dedicated to the moon whose chief priest was called 'Maramuk'. Some one told Masudi that he saw inscribed on the gate of this 'house' a teaching of 'Budast, the philosopher' in Persian script which read 'To reach the gate of a king three qualities are needed: intelligence, patience and wealth'; but underneath this was a writing in Arabic script saying 'Budast is wrong: liberty is obligatory; for whoever has got even one of these qualities why should he seek the king's door?' v. The 'house' at Gindan in the city of Sanaa destroyed by Uthman and is today a huge mound where a well has been dug; vi. A temple built by Karshan Shah at Farghana dedicated to the Sun and destroyed by the Caliph Mustansir billah; vii. A 'house' in the highlands of China dedicated to the five heavenly bodies.

The name 'Sindusab' in the above list is doubtful; Masudi adds that he does not wish to describe it in detail and if others wish to do so they might do it, for it is such a well-known idol house in Hind. Since he mentions the Multan temple separately in another context, 72, (the idol thereof is also named Multan or Mulasthan) and which he visited around 912/13 A.D. and whose description, particularly the reference to the magnet, does not tally with that given here or in Ibn Nadim's above account, 'Sindu Sab'—whatever may be its correct form—should refer to some other temple; so should also Ibn Nadim's 'house' and idol of Multan. Even if



the 'Sindusab' could be supposed to be some kind of misreading or corrupted Arabicization of 'Samba' the traditional founder of the northern form of the Snn worship whose earliest temple was set up at Mulasthan (Multan), according to Bhandarkar R. G.: *Vaisnavism, Saivism and other minor religious sects*, Strassburg, 1913, 153-54, also cf: *HCIIP*, II, 332, 465-66—and for which priests, called Magas, had to be brought from 'Sakadvipa', the fact of the magnetic stones is not mentioned by any of the other Arab travellers, beginning from Abu Said of Siraf (c. 916 A.D.), Istakhrī (c. 951 A.D.) all of whom describe it as a human figure seated in a quadrangular posture on a masonry throne, its body covered with a red morocco-like skin with only its eyes of precious gems remaining visible, and a golden crown on its head; E & D, I, 11, 27-28; Al-Beruni, who however visited Multan after the temple had been destroyed and converted into a mosque by the Qarmathian usurper Jalam ibn Shaiban around 975 A.D. also gives the same description, possibly from reports of local inhabitants; *Indica*, tr. Zachan, London 1914, p. 116. It was however rebuilt and was still functioning when Thevenot saw it, in the early years of Aurangzeb's reign and his description, remarkably enough agrees almost precisely with that of the Arab writers; cited in Cunningham, Reports V, reprint Varanasi, 1966, 119. The only mention by any Arah writer of the magnet in connection with an idol is by Qazwini in his *Ajaibul Buldan* (E & D I, 97) in which the idol at Somnath is reported to have been held up in the air by magnets concealed all around it. But this is a 12th century account; even Ibnul Asir, the oldest extant authority giving details of the Somnath expedition, does not mention it. Besides, Somnath could not have attained the celebrity in the 8th or the 9th century as it did later, for Al-Beruni states that the fortress containing the idol destroyed by Mahmud was not very old, having been built about a hundred years before his time; op. cit. II, 105. It is however not unlikely that Ibn Nadim, and so also Masudi, confused this temple with magnets with the one described by the garulons Abu Dulaf as being situated in the desert 'in the country between Makran and Qandahar' obviously situated near the sea whose flood waters swirl round it but cause no damage to the temple. 'This fits with the description of Somnath, washed by the sea on every full moon'; and it is in connection with this temple that Abu Dulaf was told by a Brahmin (evidently he had not seen it himself) that it was suspended between heaven and earth without any support'. If this is correct then the source of the story of the Somnath idol being held by magnets which was magnified by Qazwini and subsequent Arah and Persian writers should be traced ultimately to this Brahmin informant of Abu Dulaf. See Qazwini, in E & D I, 97-98.

<sup>12</sup> Reading of these names is very doubtful.

<sup>13</sup> The first Saffarid ruler (868-878) who revolted against the Ahbasides and set up a powerful but short-lived independent kingdom comprising Sijistan, Khurasan, and Tukharistan and even attacked Baghdad where he was defeated.

<sup>14</sup> One 'bahir' weighed 333 'minas', one 'mina' being equal to about two pounds according to E&D, I, 83.

<sup>15</sup> I could not ascertain what this 'Sanf' refers to. Masudi, *op. cit.* 66, mentions the 'bahr' of Sanf (sea of Sanf) within which is the empire of the Maharaj, lord of the islands, and which is next to the 'Sea of China'. Could this Sanf be the 'San-fo-tsi', the Chinese name for the Sailendia empire of the Malay peninsula of whose power, extent and wealth the Arabs speak so highly? But in the present account Abu Dulaf places it in 'Hind'. The names La-jin and Lu-quin sounds Chinese and may reflect what Ibn Nadim's Christian informant had heard in China. See *HCIIP*, IV, 413. Or could it be Champha whose territory was once part of the empire of the Maharaj of 'Zabaj' (Java).

<sup>16</sup> It seems the original manuscript had a drawing here.

<sup>17</sup> With slight change in the position of the strokes and dots this could be read 'diti-bakti' or 'Aditi-bakti' (*Adityabhakta*); Shahrastani, *op. cit.* 452, has 'al-dinkitiah'. This must refer to the Sauras or Sun-worshippers. Cf. the name *Adityavardhana*, the grand father of *Harshavardhana* who, among other titles also calls himself and his ancestors *Parmadityabhakta*; mentioned in one of his inscriptions; E. *Indica* I. 72-73, cited in Bhandarkar, R. G. *op. cit.* 155.

<sup>18</sup> One of Flügel's manuscripts writes it as 'takratiya', while others omit the dots making the word unreadable. Shahrastani, *op. cit.* 449, writes it as above. Nadvi *op. cit.* 206 225-226, thought it refers to the sect whom the travellers Abu Zaid of Siraf, referring mostly to South India and Malabar coast, calls 'bekarji' or 'bekarjiin' and 'bekor' by Buzurg b. Shahriyar. Except Shahrastani none of the Arab writers mention the strange custom of fastening iron plate around the belly, but that they wore a garland and crown of human skulls, a practice not ascribed to this sect in Ibn Nadim's report. Evidently the geographers were referring to the Kapaliks or Kalamukhs whose name they seem to have confused with that of the Digambar Jains (which in Arabic script could with misplacement of the dots appear as 'bekarjin' or

simply by omitting the latter half, as 'Bekor' or 'Bekar') the naked Jain ascetics whom the Buddhists call 'Nirgranthin' or heretics, and what Ibn Nadim's and Shahrastani's manuscripts read as 'bikrintiniyah' doubtless stands for 'nirgranthiniyah' or 'nigranthiniyah' (in Arabic the letter 'b' can be changed into 'n' merely by putting the dot above instead of below the letter). The description of the unclothed ascetics is meant to apply to the 'digambar' sect of the 'Nirgranthins' as part of the 'Anashananiyas' or non-eating ascetics. As for the custom of wearing an iron plate, the only non-Arab source I could find where this is mentioned is Hiuentzang who, while in Raktamrittika in Karnasuvarna, was told of the construction not many years before his arrival of a *Sangharama* by the local king in commemoration of the defeat in a disputation by a Buddhist Sramana of a South Indian heretic "who wore over his belly copper plates and on his head a lighted torch . . . and who on being asked the reason of his strange attire said 'my wisdom is so great I fear my belly will burst, and because I am moved with pity for the ignorant multitude who live in darkness therefore I carry this light on my head' ". Beal: *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, London 1906, II, 201-204; I, 4, 130. For the 'Digambar' Jains in Decan and South India see *HCIP*, III, 410. It is remarkable that this description, even the words of the ascetic as reported by Hiuentzang should be reproduced so exactly in Ibn Nadim's report and in Shahrastani.

<sup>18</sup> Reading of the term is doubtful; could be read as 'rajmartiya', 'rahmartiya', 'rajmartabiya'. Nadvi, op. cit. 207, reads Rajput cannot be correctly fitted to the description given. Abu Zaid of Siraf speaks "300/400 companions of the king who on his accession are served cooked rice on banana leaves and who have joined him of their own free will without compulsion. When the king has eaten some of this rice he gives it to his companions. Each in his turn approaches, takes a small quantity and eats it. All those who so eat the rice are obliged, when the king dies or is slain, to burn themselves to the very last man on the very day of the king's decease. This is a duty which admits of no delay" E & D I, 9. Could the Nairs of the Malabar coast have any connection with such custom to which Abu Zaid and Ibn Nadim's Report refer?

<sup>19</sup> Shahrastani, op. cit. 451, adds, possibly on the basis of the same report, that this sect is named 'Bhaduniya' or 'Bhaduiya', a misreading for the Pasupata sect? Cf. Tarachand: *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1963, p. 10. About 'Jur-ān' I can only refer to a place (spelt in English as 'Janran') in Makran towards Kirman, mentioned by Idrisi (12th century): *Nuzhatul Mushtaq fi Ikhtinakul Aflak* (original text unpublished)- extracts in E & D, I, 81.

<sup>20</sup> d. 961 A.D.; author, among other philosophical and historical works, of the well-known *Tarikh sinī Muluk wal Ambia*, a philosophical history of the pre-Islamic dynasties, ed. Gottwaldt, Leipzig, 1848, reprinted Iran, p. 7; a partial English translation of the portion relating to Sind by M. U. Dandpota in *Journal of Cama Oriental Institute*, 1932, 58-120.

<sup>21</sup> op. cit. I, 58.

<sup>22</sup> op. cit. 305.

<sup>23</sup> *Asar ul Baqiyah*, tr Ed. Sachau, London 1879, 186-88. The original text of the *Kitab Bilawhar wa Budasaf and Kitab al Budd* was published in Bombay, 1306/1888; see also *JRAS*, 1890, 119-155.

<sup>24</sup> op. cit. 345.



# The Ideology of the Bhakti Movement: The Case of Dadu Dayal\*

HARBANS MUKHIA

THE Bhakti movement has been variously interpreted by a number of historians. Mostly the movement has been studied in terms of its doctrines; at best attempts have been made to examine its influence on Hindu-Muslim relations in medieval India, or on the caste-system. Such examination, again, has largely been based on the profession of certain ideas by the leaders of the movement rather than on the sociological study of the impact of these ideas on the castes and communities in medieval India. However, McLeod has attempted a sociological study of the Sikhs in the time of Guru Nanak and Irfan Habib has tried to trace the origin of monotheistic movement of the 15th to 17th centuries to certain technological and economic changes during the 13th and 14th centuries.<sup>1</sup>

In the following pages an attempt has been made to examine the attitude of an extremely important leader of the Bhakti movement in the second half of the 16th century, namely, Dadu Dayal, toward the state and various social classes. The significance of such a study perhaps lies in the fact that Dadu Dayal's attitude as that of the other leaders of the movement, would appear to be both a reflection as well as a determinant of current popular consciousness regarding the state and society, when we keep in mind the mass following of those leaders. Incidentally, this paper also seeks to explore medieval Hindi literature, in this case Dadu Dayal's *Granthavali*, as a source of information for understanding medieval Indian society.<sup>2</sup> The importance of this source for such a study cannot be overestimated, for a large portion of it, particularly the portion belonging to the Bhakti period of Hindi literature, is not only a non-official source but also the only mouth-piece of popular attitudes toward medieval Indian state and society.

\* This paper is part of a larger project to study the ideology of the Bhakti movement in north India from the 15th to the 17th century.

Dadu was a spiritual descendant of Kabir.<sup>2</sup> He was born in 1544 A.D. most probably at Ahmedabad and he died, according to tradition, at Naraina village in Rajasthan in 1603 A.D. He was thus a contemporary of Akbar.<sup>3</sup>

Although Dadu appears to have travelled practically all over northern India from Ahmedabad to Rajasthan then to Banaras and Bihar up to Bengal, he probably spent the major part of his life in Rajasthan.<sup>4</sup> It is, however, difficult to determine a chronology of his life, for he is very reticent in talking about himself and his disciples' accounts of his life contain much that is apocryphal.<sup>5</sup>

It is certain, however, that Dadu had a low-class origin, being a cotton-carder.<sup>6</sup> A number of editions of Dadu Dayal's works have so far been published but the one prepared by Parshu Ram Chaturvedi and published by the Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi, in 2023 V.S. (1966 A.D.) is based on a manuscript dated 1710 V.S. (1653 A.D.) probably to commemorate the fiftieth death-anniversary of Dadu. The chronology of the verses, or the places where these verses were composed and recited are almost impossible to determine. Since Dadu was a preacher who covered a large area in northern India, the language of his verses must have varied according to the audience he was addressing. This is obvious from Dadu's use of *Khariboli*, Rajasthani, Panjabi, Gujarati and Persian languages; often there is a mixture of all these languages in one verse. Secondly, since the verses came spontaneously to Dadu as the vehicle of his discourses, the content must have varied from verse to verse even before the same audience. But in the MSS. the verses have been classified according to their content.

Dadu's verses have been preserved in two traditions—the oral (*maghazia*) and the written (*kaghazia*).<sup>8</sup> The verses communicated orally have not yet been compiled. Kshiti Mohan Sen has estimated the number of orally communicated *padas* (a *pada* varying from 6 to 160 verses) alone at 20,000<sup>9</sup> whereas the number of *sakhis* (individual verses) is much larger. This estimate has been seriously questioned by Chaturvedi.<sup>10</sup> In the written tradition, however, among the better MSS. neither the number of verses varies very greatly considering that many of these are merely repetitions, nor do the content and language except for the substitution of some words for others without altering the meaning significantly.

One of the most significant concepts which emerge from Dadu's *Granthavali* is the concept of the Guru. Man's approach to God is mediated through the Guru. "Without the Guru even a hundred thousand moons and millions of suns cannot enlighten man's dark corners."<sup>11</sup> "With all the pools of water, the bird would remain thirsty if the Guru's grace is not available."<sup>12</sup>

The Guru's power over man is thus absolute. Man's loyalty to the Guru is both personal<sup>13</sup> and total. At the same time the Guru on his part is benevo-

lent to man; indeed, he merely acts as his guide<sup>14</sup> in the attainment of the ultimate objective, the *nirvana*.<sup>15</sup>

This concept of the Guru—on the one hand holding absolute power over his disciples and on the other being benevolent towards them—corresponds remarkably closely to, say, Abul Fazl's concept of the sovereign.<sup>16</sup>

This concept is further buttressed by Dadu's picturesque description of God and his court attended by all the grandeur of a great monarch.

Dadu variously refers to God as 'Sahib',<sup>17</sup> 'Sultan'.<sup>18</sup> 'Maharaj',<sup>19</sup> the Rao of Raos<sup>20</sup> etc. God's court contains all the regal paraphernalia—the slave-girls, the poets, the dancers, the drum-beaters, the treasury,<sup>21</sup> the messengers<sup>22</sup> etc. There are also the familiar officials in God's court—the Diwan,<sup>23</sup> the news-writers,<sup>24</sup> the courtiers who keep standing with folded hands<sup>25</sup> and the soldiers.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult for a person of low (spiritual) attainments to enter God's court where millions of gods keep standing with folded hands.<sup>27</sup> As one enters one has to perform the *sijda*.<sup>28</sup>

The relationship between God and man is akin to that of master and slave. God is the master (*malik*) of the territory (*mulk*)<sup>29</sup> and man is His slave who owes Him undisputed loyalty.<sup>30</sup> Indeed a truly loyal servant of God is one who would gladly accept even execution at His hands, or being drowned in a river or thrown down a hill.<sup>31</sup> Even the highest officials, including the khans are accountable to Him.<sup>32</sup> His *farman* cannot but be obeyed, for it is so powerful as to turn a mountain into a rye and a rye into a mountain in an instant.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, God's generosity toward his servants is unbounded. He is the protector of His servants.<sup>34</sup> He forgives them for all their shortcomings.<sup>35</sup>

It would be interesting to compare these ideas with those of Abul Fazl regarding the sovereign.

Kingship, for Abul Fazl, is a gift of God.<sup>36</sup> an emblem of the power of God.<sup>37</sup> His ideal king, Akbar, is referred to as the 'Lord of the Age whom the Almighty has given the power to conquer and has made the king of the world and its people . . . .'<sup>38</sup> King being the shadow of God, he is answerable to Him alone and his power to rule over the mortals is therefore absolute. Abul Fazl reinforces the king's absolutism further by advancing the concept of 'one rule, one ruler, one guide, one aim and one thought'.<sup>39</sup> This is tied up with the chief justification that Abul Fazl gives for the king's absolutism—the need to dispel any source of conflict in society, or, in other words, to maintain law and order in the given social and political set-up. "If the majesty of royalty did not exist, how would various disturbances subside?"<sup>40</sup>—an idea very close to that of Dadu as we shall see later.

Abul Fazl pleads for unreserved loyalty to the king, particularly to

Akbar. In fact any act not in complete conformity with such loyalty, and of course any act contrary to it, is bound to be visited by retribution.<sup>41</sup> Even among loyal men there are two types: those who are loyal due to some consideration and those who are 'noble truth-seekers who illuminate their altruistic hearts with the light of love and stand at the head of the chosen ones of God'.<sup>42</sup>

Abul Fazl's king is characterised by great generosity, besides majesty and absolute power. Abul Fazl quotes Akbar, while pardoning the rebel Daud, 'We, by virtue of our being the shadow of God, receive little and give much. Our forgiveness has no relish for vengeance.'<sup>43</sup> Abul Fazl himself attributes to the king *inter alia* qualities of 'paternal love towards the subjects', and 'a large heart'.<sup>44</sup>

Given this correspondence between Dadu's concept of a majestic and absolute but benevolent God/Guru at the social level and Abul Fazl's similar concept of king at the political level, it is only logical that Dadu should admit the need for an absolute political authority. "There would be peace," says Dadu, "only if there is unity of political authority; if there is duality (of such authority), no one can remain happy due to the ensuing conflicts. With one political authority there is tranquillity in the city (kingdom); the king and the subjects are happy and there is light everywhere".<sup>45</sup>

The other social classes and groups that have been referred to in the *Granthavali* are the Rana, the Rawat, the Sahu, the Sarraf, the trader, the *banjara* or the travelling merchant, the peasant and the weaver.

Dadu fully accepts the social function of all these classes and groups in the society of his day. In fact he uses the simile of God for almost everyone of them in different verses thus elevating their position in society. Nowhere does he make any specific complaint against the functioning of any one of them. At times he makes brief protest against some of them but in a very general way and that by implication. Thus, for example, he would rather that the ranas and raos along with the khans control their ambition (lit. involvement) from outgrowing itself and 'covering the whole earth and the sky'.<sup>46</sup> Or, while he accepts the honourable social position of the rawat by calling himself a rawat of Raja Ram, he gives him an advice on self-control in order that the village be administered effectively. "Dadu. Rawat of Raja Ram, never forsake (His) name; take care of your soul and you can control the village (the body) better".<sup>47</sup> It is obviously implied in this advice that not only did the rawat tend to transgress the area of his jurisdiction in dealing with the peasants, but that such transgression led to the ruin both of the peasantry as well as of the administrative authority, including the rawat, in the long run.

From the references made by Dadu to sections connected with trade and

finance—the trader, the sahu etc.—it appears that Dadu gives them a place of high honour. He accepts the validity of their business practices but only demands honesty of them in the interest of their business itself. That one should endeavour to get the maximum price for one's goods<sup>48</sup> and one should actively engage in speculation (*satta*) in order to enhance the price is a notion stressed by Dadu at more than one place. "One who has devoted himself to God is in reality the wise one; engage in *satta* with the Creator if you want to sell at high price".<sup>49</sup> "Stake your head in speculation if you want to attain immortality."<sup>50</sup> In fact anyone who does not look after his principal as well as his profit is a simpleton. "Dadu, if you recite Ram's name you keep everything your principal as well as your profit; if you do not recite it you lose everything; awake O simpleton."<sup>51</sup> Similarly the sahu or the money-lender is looked upon not as an exploiter but as a protector to whom the borrower is morally obligated. "God gives (the money) to His servant to keep, the servant develops evil intentions (about the money) Dadu, the whole money belongs to the Sah, to think of it otherwise is to deceive oneself."<sup>52</sup> "The head surrendered to Ram is the head which has acquired a protector; Dadu has returned (to God) what he had got from Him and is now free of debt. It is best to be the first to repay the dues to the lender and be free of debt; later on everyone repays one's debt anyway."<sup>53</sup>

It is an indication of Dadu's appreciation of the role of wealth and money in society that he often resorts to measuring even spiritual attainments purely in terms of wealth, particularly jewels, pearls etc. God and the sadhu are often looked upon as jewellers in contrast to the ordinary man who treats the jewel (life) as a cowri and who carries away pebbles (the humdrum life) in the belief that these are jewels (the ideal, spiritual life).<sup>54</sup> It is, indeed, Dadu's belief that it is characteristic of the *kaliyuga* that the rich should become poor, and the poor rich, that the pure should become impure and the impure pure.<sup>55</sup>

However Dadu advises the trader—and presumably the others—to exercise self-restraint and not indulge in falsehood in their dealings and to be honest with the quality (and quantity) of his goods. This, indeed, would only enhance his trade.<sup>56</sup> It is only mildly implied here that the trader was not always fair in his transactions.

The only *sakhi* in which the *sarraf* is as such mentioned is not very significant except that the use of the term is recognized.<sup>57</sup> Similarly Dadu's references to agriculture and the cultivator are somewhat perfunctory in that he refers only to the need for irrigation and seeds for the purposes of cultivation.<sup>58</sup> These references do not yield any specific information in terms of agricultural practices or even the social condition of the various sections in the rural society except on some marginal points. Dadu's repeated empha-



sis on the need to give personal attention to cultivation by the land-owner in order to enhance the productivity of his land would perhaps suggest that lands deprived of such attention due to large-scale cultivation through agricultural labour tended to be relatively less productive. Indeed, Dadu employs the similes of God and *satguru* to refer to the cultivator who devotes such personal attention to his field and suggests that the crop growing from such labour would be ever-productive.<sup>59</sup>

In another context Dadu appears to suggest that twenty *biswas* of land was a source of enough prosperity to make the owner forget God.<sup>60</sup> But this is perhaps just a metaphorical use of the unit of measurement of land.

Dadu's references to the *banjara*<sup>61</sup> and the weaver<sup>62</sup> yield some slight information on the former's daily life and some of the latter's techniques of manufacture. However, none of these references have any social significance. The *banjara* arrives home early in the night, spends the second part of the night with his wife, lifts a big load and gets going in the third part and in the last part becomes a *pir*. The night here signifies a life-cycle and the '*pir*' has been used satirically to refer to the *banjara's* old age when he cannot carry on his trade.

Dr. Tara Chand has dealt at some length with another aspect of Dadu's life and work, viz., his championing the synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures<sup>63</sup> and it is not necessary here to go into this discussion again. It might, however, be briefly stated that whereas at the political level he conceives of his God in the image of the ruling king, at the social level he sharply attacks the orthodoxy of the conservative elements within the Hindu as well as the Muslim communities.<sup>64</sup> Indeed Dadu looks upon being a Musalman or a kafir as possessing or lacking certain virtues. "Miyan Musalman really carries *kufr* in his heart, he has got involved in (worldly) matters and forgotten all about God (Rehman)."<sup>65</sup> "Dadu, kafir is one who tells lies, who does not keep his heart clean; (the kafir) does not recognize the Lord; he has in him all the lies and deception."<sup>66</sup> He has no compassion nor affection in his heart, his heart is hard as the lightning, he should really be called a black kafir, Momin is really a different one."<sup>67</sup>

Thus it would appear that Dadu generally accepts at the social level the ideals and the institutions of the ruling classes. He also accepts the class-structure of the society as it existed then. He would only like different classes to function more honestly and efficiently.<sup>68</sup> His thought is not the thought of protest but at best of resignation,<sup>69</sup> of avoiding any conflicts in society.<sup>70</sup> Dadu's thought therefore is not able to break the barriers of the ideology of the ruling classes; on the contrary, it is this ideology which percolates down to the social level and gets assimilated there in muted forms. Thus as Marx said, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling

ideas",<sup>71</sup> except when a given class seeks to overthrow the whole existing social structure and the conditions are ready for such change. And it was too early to expect Dadu, or, for that matter the leaders of the Bhakti movement as a whole, to be the harbingers of this change, their great following among the masses notwithstanding.<sup>72</sup>

The mass-participation in the Bhakti movement during the 15th and the 16th centuries can perhaps be explained by the need for such re-adjustments within the caste-system as had been necessitated by certain economic and administrative changes in India following the establishment of the Turkish state. Irfan Habib has discussed the technological changes as well as the new crafts that were introduced in India during the 13th and 14th centuries which considerably raised the productivity of labour in various spheres of production.<sup>73</sup> The high degree of administrative centralization in the same period ensured both relative stability and promotion of trade. Consequently, even some of the lower castes found themselves relatively affluent and therefore sought corresponding social status.<sup>74</sup> To a large extent this search is reflected in the forceful attacks on the caste-system as a whole; Nanak even tried to put the idea of a casteless community into practice. But the effortlessness which characterized the re-instatement of the caste even among the Sikhs suggests that its basis had never been fully demolished; at the very best a certain flexibility was allowed to creep into the system. It is interesting to consider the class- and caste-origins of the leaders of the Bhakti movement during the phase of massive popular support to it in north India, that is, during the 15th and 16th centuries. Kabir was a weaver, Nanak a petty-trader and Dadu a cotton-carder along with a host of others like Dhanna, Pipa etc. of similar origins. More important, however, is the fact that it is the problems of the people of the lower castes and classes that get reflected in their writings.

It is, however, significant that apart from their attacks on the caste, the complaints of economic oppression by the leaders of the Bhakti movement are made only against the lowest rungs of administration—against the village-headman in particular, or the accounts-keeper etc.<sup>75</sup> Also that they prefer these complaints before none other than the king or the *diwan* or before the idealized image of the king, viz., God. At times they fear that the *diwan* might be dishonest as well, but they hardly ever express a grouse against the king. The mass-participation in what appeared to them a movement of protest against the caste and economic oppression even though at the local level, and the simultaneous acceptance of the basic economic, political and even social structure as it existed then combined with the idealization of absolutism perhaps contributed on the one hand to peasant uprisings against the Mughal state later in the 17th century and on the other to shaping the

successor states in their internal organization as miniature imitations of the Mughal model.

# NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> YUSUF HUSAIN, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, Bombay, 2nd edn., 1959, pp. 1-31, views the Bhakti movement as the result of the influence of the Islamic concept of the unity of God on Hindu polytheism; A. B. Pandey, *The First Afghan Empire in India*, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 256-90, looks upon it as the attempt of the Hindu community to reform itself in order to absorb the challenge posed by the Muslim political power and the Muslim attempt at dominating the Hindus in the social and religious spheres; to I. H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947)*, The Hague, 1962, pp. 104-24, the Bhakti movement was a characteristically subtle attempt of the Hindus at luring the Muslims into its fold; K. S. Lal, *Twilight of the Sultanate*, Bombay, 1963, pp. 291-315, considers the movement during the 15th century 'the silent revolution in Indian society' resulting from an interaction between Islamic, particularly Sufic, and Hindu ideas. Tara Chand in his classic study, *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, 2nd edn., Allahabad, 1963, sees in the movement two opposing schools of religious thought—the radical school represented by Kabir and the conservative one represented by Tulsidas, p. 145. For two different approaches see McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1968 and Irfan Habib, "The Historical Background of the Popular Monotheistic Movement of the 15th-17th centuries," (mimeo), presented to the Seminar on Ideas, Medieval India, University of Delhi, November 1965.

<sup>2</sup> There are very few specific pieces of information relating, for instance, to agrarian relations in the *Granthavali*, the kind of information that has been analyzed by Professor Irfan Habib, basing himself on the *Guru Granth Sahib*, in his "Evidence for Sixteenth Century Agrarian Conditions in the Guru Granth Sahib", *I.F.S.H.R.*, Vol. I, no. 3, Jan-March, 1964, pp. 64-72. This paper therefore largely attempts to make a study of Dadu's general attitudes towards the various aspects of society for which there is information in the *Granthavali*. Since Dadu was both a follower of the popular movement that the Bhakti movement had become in medieval India, as well as its leader with a great following of his own, it is obvious that his reflections were not merely personal but had a popular base.

<sup>3</sup> PARSHU RAM CHATURVEDI, ed., *Dadu Dayal Granthavali*, Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi, 2023 v.s. (1966 A.D.), p. 92/verse 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. 1-2. Ram Kumar Verma places the date of his birth in 1658 v.s. (1601 A.D.) but goes on to state that he was a contemporary of Akbar. On the authority of Dadu's disciple, Jangopal, Ram Kumar Verma even claims that 'religious discussion used to take place between Akbar and Dadu'. See his *Hindi Sahitya ka Alochnatmak Itihas*, 6th edn., Allahabad, 1971, p. 273. However, unless Dadu had these discussions with Akbar at the age of four, Akbar having died in 1605, the date of Dadu's birth given by Verma seems far off the mark, although he has given the same date twice in the same paragraph.

<sup>5</sup> PARSHU RAM CHATURVEDI, *op. cit.*, Introduction, pp. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> *The Shri Dadu Janmlila Parchi* of Dadu's disciple Jangopal and the *Bhaktiamal* of another of his followers, Raghodass, both give very dubious information about Dadu's life. One has therefore to rely on scattered pieces of information to reconstruct whatever little can be reconstructed about Dadu's life.

<sup>7</sup> *Granthavali*, where Dadu refers to himself as a Pinjara, p. 455/verse 1 and Dhunna, p. 477/verse 1. Pinjara, according to the *Vrihat Hindi Shabdakosh*, Gyan Mandal, Banaras, 2009 v.s. (1952), means a cotton-carder. *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* also refers to him as a *naddaf*, ed. Nazar Ashraf, Calcutta, 1809, p. 267.

<sup>8</sup> Among others the following editions have so far been published: Sudhakar Dwivedi, ed., *Shri Dadu Dayal ki Vani*, Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha, 1906; Sudhakar Dwivedi, ed., *Dadu Dayal ka Sabad*, Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha, 1907; Chandrika Prasad Tripathi, ed., *Shri Swami Dadu Dayal ki Vani*, Ajmer, 1964 v.s. (1907 A.D.); *Dadu Padsangrah*, Lahore, 1917 etc. Parshu Ram Chaturvedi's edition, which I have used for this paper, compares six MSS, and while preparing the oldest one for publication, the editor has given all the variations in the other MSS in the footnotes.

<sup>9</sup> CHATURVEDI, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, Introduction, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

## IDEOLOGY OF THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

- <sup>11</sup> *Granthavali*, p. 7/58.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5/44.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2/4 "Dadu met the Guru with great ease, and (the Guru) embraced him; great kindness was thus shown to me by the kind one (the Guru) and all my lamps were lit."
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2/10 "When you meet the true Guru, he solves all your problems; he puts you on the boat and carries you across the river." Or, *ibid.*, p. 3/17 "When one is drowning in the *bhau sagar* it is Satguru who rescues one; Dadu, meeting the Guru is meeting the boatman who will put you on to his boat."
- <sup>15</sup> Dadu's description of the ultimate state of bliss is suggestive of *nirvana*, see *ibid.*, p. 392/35; at another place he even uses the term *nirvana* itself, p. 360/*pada* 15, verse 3.
- <sup>16</sup> This point will be discussed later.
- <sup>17</sup> *Granthavali*, pp. 148/11, 149/15, 18, 152/37, 38 etc.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 406/*pada* 20, verse 3, 434/1.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465/*pada* 3, verse 2.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348/*pada* 4, verse 1.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 474-5/*pada* 19.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341/*pada* 8, verse 1.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 488/*pada* 10, verse 3.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 474/*pada* 19, verse 3.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 470/*pada* 9, verse 2.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 238/14, 239/19 where Dadu portrays God's servants as brave and loyal soldiers who are prepared to surrender their heads in God's cause.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 470-71/*pada* 9.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35/67, 67/209, 180/41 etc.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428/*pada* 6, verse 2.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340/*pada* 6. "God you are my master and I am your slave." Indeed the *Granthavali* is full of references where man is portrayed as God's slave.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 478/*pada* 28.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360/*pada* 15, verse 3.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221/2.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294/33.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 293/26, 312/*pada* 11, verse 1, 454/*pada* 2.
- <sup>36</sup> Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama (AN)*, Bib. Ind., Vol. II, p. 285.
- <sup>37</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari (Ain)*, Blochmann (tr.), Vol. I, Bib. Ind. 1927, p. 167.
- <sup>38</sup> *AN*, Vol. II, pp. 128-29.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 4.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ain*, Vol. I, Blochmann, ed., p. 2; Blochmann's translation has a slightly different version, p. 2.
- <sup>41</sup> *AN*, Vol. III, p. 20.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 449-50.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ain*, Blochmann (tr.), p. 3.
- <sup>45</sup> *Granthavali*, pp. 130-31/31-32.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253/68.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19/36.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170/6, 266/34. Where man is advised to make effort to sell his (spiritual) wares at high prices.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19/34.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386/*pada* 22, verse 4: Immortality is the highest price for obtaining which speculation is the best method and therefore the stakes should be high.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20/40.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101/41.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241-38-39. Ram is looked upon both as the money-lender and the protector (nath).
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162/122. See also p. 265/25, 26, 27, 266/31 etc.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386/*pada* 23, verse 1.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266/34.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174/38.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 303-05.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303/3. "If the master (sahib) does not irrigate (his land), the plant would wither away; Dadu, if the Lord irrigates (the land), the plant would keep on growing."

See also p. 303/5, 6, 305/19 etc.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210/15. "One who keeps his body tidy and absorbs himself in his twenty *biswas* (of land) and does not remember God, breaks the *Hadis*."

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 504-05.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 438/*pada* 1.

<sup>52</sup> IARA CHAND, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-86.

<sup>53</sup> *Granthavali*, pp. 23-24, 153/43-44, 160/102-03, 459/*pada* 13, verse 2, 460/*pada* 14, verse 3 etc.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149/19.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149/19.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275/34.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151/28. "Dadu, he is the Momin whose heart is soft like wax, who does not forget the Lord; who does not oppress (any one) and does not enjoy life sitting idly by (i.e. who does the work that is due from him), such a Momin will go to the heaven." See also p. 182/50: "Give to everyone what is his due and do some good to others; Dadu, that servant is best who does not carry any load (i.e., undue exaction from anyone) on his head."

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 422/*pada* 4 and many other places. Dadu's ideal is the man living in the world but completely detached to it as lotus is in a pond.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171-77 where Dadu forcefully disapproves of any kind of conflicts in society between sections or individuals.

<sup>60</sup> KARL MARX, *German Ideology*, in Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I. Moscow, 1969/p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> Discussing the impact of the Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra, D. D. Kosambi remarks, "The reform and its struggle was never consciously directed against feudalism so that its very success meant feudal patronage—and ultimately feudal decay by diversion of a democratic movement into the dismal channels of conquest and rapine", *Myth and Reality*, Bombay 1962, p. 35. With some qualifications this precisely is the point.

<sup>62</sup> "Presidential Address", Medieval India Section, *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Varanasi Session (1969), Patna, 1970, pp. 139-61.

<sup>63</sup> IREAN HABIB, "The Historical Background of the Popular Monotheistic Movement etc.", (mimeo), 1965.

<sup>64</sup> MADHU TANIK, *Historical Analysis of Kabir's Poetry*, unpublished M. Phil dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1974, pp. 79-80; Dadu Dayal, *Granthavali*, pp. 19/36, 253/68.

# A Note on the Conception of Akbar's Religious Policy\*

IQTIDAR ALAM KHAN

THE origins of Akbar's enlightened religious policy are generally sought to be traced back to the various intellectual influences which moulded his personal beliefs. As a result the existing interpretation of Akbar's attitude in matters pertaining to religion seems to run parallel to the arguments of Abul Fazl and Badauni, both of whom tend to explain, though from different angles, the development of the institutions and policies of the Mughal Empire during Akbar's reign in terms of the evolution of the latter's views. This has resulted, on the one hand, in reducing a discussion of Akbar's religious policy and his relations with Rajput *zamindars* and princes, largely to speculation based on selected facts that have been highlighted by Abul Fazl and Badauni. On the other hand, such an approach obscures from view more fundamental factors, namely the processes contributing to the Indianization of the Imperial superstructure since the thirteenth century. At the root of such an approach lies the presupposition that in despotic states like Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire the ideological content of the state policies was determined entirely by the religious predilections of the monarch and a handful of the members of the hierarchy occupying commanding positions in the upper echelons of administration. A study of the political institutions based on this presupposition would naturally lead one to the conclusion that the so-called Muslim states of Medieval India represented the domination of orthodox Islam over Hindu society and that the policies adopted by Akbar were only a freak phenomenon in an otherwise grim story of forced conversions, temple destructions, and the humiliation of the non-Muslims in all possible ways. Or from another angle the history of Medieval India could be painted as an account of the liberation of the oppressed castes from the

\* This is a version of a paper read at the seminar on Historical Models in the Study of Tradition and Change in India, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, October, 1969.

domination of the Brahminical system under the impact of a revolutionary ideology which tended to use the political power as its instrument.

Many of the modern historians who have attempted a study of the attitude of the Muslim power in India on religious issues, have been unconsciously influenced by the European model of the relationship between the state and the church. Sometimes Muslim orthodoxy, which in the Medieval Indian context had only a limited significance and existed only as one of the numerous hangers-on of a particular section of the ruling class, is treated at par with the organised church of Medieval Europe and their relations with the political authority are accepted as the central feature of the so-called religious policy of a particular king. In this kind of analysis sometimes uncritical acceptance of certain qualitative statements contained in the Persian chronicles, which are mostly compilations of the persons representing the interests of the orthodox Muslim classes, leads one to attach unwarranted importance to the role of religion in politics. For example Smith believing Badauni's rather sweeping statements that Akbar had not only forsaken Islam but also used to take pleasure in denigrating it, accuses him of hypocrisy and 'farical' behaviour when he finds him taking a tolerant attitude towards the popular religious sentiment of the Indian Muslims.<sup>1</sup> The same approach goaded some of the Muslim historians to discover an 'orthodox reaction' against Akbar's alleged anti-Islamic policies on the flimsy evidence of a few letters written by a *sufi* of orthodox views to different nobles.<sup>2</sup>

The present writer does not wish to underestimate the significant role which the individual plays in history. It is therefore not contended that Akbar's own religious views and outlook did not determine to an appreciable extent the religious policy of the state. It is, however, being submitted that such individual views can become significant only if there are objective forces in the society which favour such views.

In the present paper attention is being focused on the material factors which influenced the attitude of the Mughal state under Akbar on matters pertaining to religion. It is less concerned with the impact of the intellectual trends and attitudes which are sometimes accepted as the determining factors in this respect. As it would be discussed elsewhere in this paper, the latter influence, although important, cannot be regarded as a decisive factor in shaping the religious policy of Akbar or for that matter of any other medieval Indian ruler. Moreover, this particular aspect has been over-emphasized in many modern works. Hence there is no point in reproducing all that discussion here. For the same reason any detailed comment on the evolution of Akbar's personal beliefs has been avoided. Certain aspects of Akbar's personal beliefs are no doubt noticed but only to the extent they were relevant for clarifying points under discussion.

The two important facts of what we understand as Akbar's religious policy were his relations, with, (a) Hindu upper classes and notably the chiefs of Rajputana, and (b) the Muslim groups. We would be content here to examine the existing interpretation on only one aspect, namely the relations with the Hindu chiefs, and attempt to present a new hypothesis, which might hold good for the other one also.

What is the basis for assuming that the contemporary intellectual trends or attitudes, were not a decisive factor in shaping the religious policy of the Medieval Indian rulers? One may refer, for instance, to Akbar's famous measures of 1562-64, abolishing *Jiziah* and pilgrimage tax, which have been characterised by S. R. Sharma as a 'turning point in the history of Muslim rule in India' enabling Akbar to create a common citizenship for all subjects, Hindus and Muslims alike.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to say that by 1562-64 Akbar had already been fully converted to the philosophy of *sulah-i-kul* (universal peace) though perhaps he might have been well-disposed towards it. The dominant influence at the Mughal court was that of intolerant orthodoxy as represented by persons like Abdun Nabi and Makhdum-ul Mulk under whose inspiration the king considered it his duty to put down heresy in all its forms. In 1564, Shaikh Mubarak and his sons, who are accused by Badauni of leading Akbar astray from Islam, were persecuted for their alleged heretical beliefs on the orders of the king himself and they were obliged to go into hiding. On the other hand, Abdun Nabi, who had been appointed as the *sadar* in 1565, with unprecedented powers to distribute patronage, had such a great hold over Akbar that the latter used to consider it a privilege to bring the Shaikh's shoes and 'place them before his feet'.<sup>4</sup> One can, therefore, hardly subscribe to the thesis that the 'liberal' policy initiated by Akbar in 1562 was primarily the result of intellectual convictions. Rather, it seems that on certain occasions the state policies were diametrically opposed to the dominant intellectual trends. Such an assumption is confirmed by Athar Ali's findings regarding Aurangzeb's reign.<sup>5</sup> According to his statistics, in the first twenty years of Aurangzeb's reign, when Aurangzeb's attitude towards Hindus had not yet become obsessively intolerant, the strength of the Hindu elements in the higher grades of the nobility was 21.6 per cent. Their strength, however, rose to 31.6 per cent during the last twenty years of the reign of the same ruler. These years, significantly enough, also witnessed a series of measures discriminating against Hindus such as the re-imposition of *Jiziah* in 1679 and the ban on the erection of new temples etc. From the above it is apparent that the intellectual convictions of the rulers had only a limited significance in determining the orientation of the state policies. For the factors determining these policies one has to look elsewhere.

Regarding Akbar's relations with non-Muslims, this paper is concerned



only with the ruling groups and not at all with the common people, about whom little evidence is available. One may however assume that notwithstanding the religion they professed, the masses were regarded, according to the traditions of the Turco-Mongol kingship, '*ri'aya* to be tended like the herdsman tended his cattle, and not as partners in the business of state. On the other hand from the outset of the Turkish rule in India, the hereditary local chiefs, mostly Hindus, were co-sharers, in varying degrees, of political power and of the agricultural surplus appropriated in the form of land revenue. The problem of delineating the spheres of influence of the two segments of the ruling class, the Imperial officers and the *zamindars*, created tensions which often had religious overtones especially in the areas where the local chiefs belonged exclusively to non-Muslim dominant castes. These tensions, which led to frequent ruptures and break-downs, were resolved, from time to time by acknowledging defacto modifications in the power structure. The deal which Akbar offered to the local chiefs and the Rajput princes in particular should be viewed in this light. Akbar's decision to include the Hindu ruling chiefs in his nobility on conditions which placed them in more advantageous position than the ordinary nobles of the Mughal or Persian origin,<sup>6</sup> was no doubt a radical measure having far-reaching consequences, but it was not an entirely novel experiment. It was neither the result of Akbar's personal fancies nor, as some people tend to think, was it dictated by opportunistic considerations. One can assess the significance of this measure only in the perspective of the developments relating to the position of the local chiefs in the Imperial administration during the preceding three hundred years.

It seems, in the thirteenth century, when the Delhi Sultanate was a preserve of the Ilbari Turks and particularly that of the *chahalgani*, the "forty" who had appropriated most of the important offices and assignments, the structure of Imperial administration was superimposed upon a *zamindari*-oriented socio-political base where the power was wielded by the local chiefs with the tacit approval, at times even support, of the central authority. During the thirteenth century the two systems did not have sufficient coordination and mostly worked at cross purposes with each other hampering the growth of administrative institutions. Under these conditions the regime retained the character of a foreign occupation. Such a precarious arrangement could not have continued indefinitely. But the early *sultans* had no clear-cut choices before them to resolve the political and legal difficulties arising out of this duality.

A way out of this situation that was again and again suggested under a religious garb by theologians was the total destruction of the power of the 'Hindus' (i.e., of non-muslim power represented by the *zamindars*) but, this,

of course, was impossible to achieve. When Iltutmish was given advice to confront the Hindus with the alternative of death or Islam, he is reported to have replied that such a policy might help the Hindus to unite and pose a serious threat to the Sultanate.<sup>7</sup> Obviously, there was no question of suppression of the local chiefs or the establishment of the *shariat*. The futility of the use of force for resolving the contradictions that existed between despotism and the *zamindars* was conceded by many other Muslim rulers.<sup>8</sup> Hence it is clear that the early Turkish rulers had no alternative but to leave virtually undisturbed the structure of power in the countryside while strengthening the despotic Imperial superstructure with an aim to ensure their political and military hegemony.

Apparently, the consolidation of the despotic institutions under the early Turkish rulers somehow also facilitated an increase in the power and influence of the *muqaddams* and *chaudhris* a considerable section of whom, particularly at the level of village chiefs, had been gradually integrated in the machine of revenue collection giving them a pivotal position in the lower echelons of the administration.<sup>9</sup> This process, once begun continued under the Khaljis and the Tughlaqs, when the Ilbari Turks at the top of the administration were replaced by more and more Muslim nobles of Indian origin. Gradually individual nobles recruited from Hindu ruling groups also started to attain high positions in the Imperial hierarchy. The mutual tussles and adjustments amongst the above three elements, namely, foreigners, Indian Muslims and Hindu Chiefs represented in the administration at different levels appear to have shaped the basic policies of the state.

Hence, Akbar's decision to recruit the Rajput chiefs in his service was not something novel. Its real significance lay in their recruitment in considerable strength. It was thus a new stage in the process of Indianization of the Sultanate that was continuing since the thirteenth century. Apparently, Akbar himself looked at this measure in the same light. This is borne out by his reply to the objections of certain nobles to 'Todar Mal's appointment to a high position in the central *dewani*. He asserted that there was nothing novel about his decision. The nobles, he pointed out, were utilizing the services of the Hindu officials for running the administration of their *jagirs* and charges since long. What harm would come if their services were utilized by the central government as well?<sup>10</sup>

It appears that by the middle of the sixteenth century the power of the *zamindars* and the autonomous Rajput chiefs had grown to such an extent that the revival of a strong centralised state in North India would be possible only if they were made a major partner in the Empire. In the case of the early Mughals this was all the more necessary as they were aliens and had no

roots in the Muslim communities of India whose leading men had been enjoying positions in the power structure.

At this time, the most influential and numerous ruling group of the Indian Muslim population were the Afghans, whose total strength, according to a near contemporary estimate, stood at eighty lacs.<sup>11</sup> Unlike Turks and Mughals, the Afghans came to this country not as conquerors but mostly as migrants who came and settled in large numbers at various places sometimes as professional cavalymen and occasionally in other professions. The existence of large rural settlements of the Afghans and their pre-eminence in the armies of the Sultanate not only enabled them to capture power at the centre but subsequently facilitated the establishment of Afghan *zamindaris* throughout the country. From *Ain-in-Akbari*, one gets an impression that, despite Akbar's deliberate policy of uprooting the Afghans, there existed, particularly in Eastern India, *zamindaris* of the Afghan chiefs on an extensive scale. Large pockets of the Afghan population also existed in the Punjab where as late as 1578 they were reported to be trying to displace the dominant castes.<sup>12</sup> When the Mughals first established themselves at Delhi after defeating Ibrahim Lodi, they were tempted to strike a deal with the Afghan chiefs. Babar went out of his way in placating the Afghan nobles by not disturbing their assignments. Ahsan Raza Khan, who has made an extensive study of Babar's administration, has established that about one third of the conquered territory was left by Babar under the charge of the same Afghan nobles who were holding it under the Lodis.<sup>13</sup> However, the experiences of the tumultuous period extending from 1526 to 1540 convinced the Mughals that they could not hope to get the support of any considerable section of the Afghans, who were their chief contenders for supremacy over Hindustan.

It was, therefore, natural for them to turn to other important ruling groups for support. Obviously, the Rajput chiefs, who at this time controlled autonomous principalities as well as *zamindaris* in a major part of the Imperial heart-land were the most important of such groups. At least some of the later Mughal historians themselves (who unlike Abul Fazl and Badauni could view Akbar's policies in their historical perspective) looked at Akbar's Rajput policy from this angle. For example, Farid Bhakkari, who compiled a dictionary of the biographies of the Mughal nobles towards the middle of the seventeenth century, has narrated an anecdote which embodies this view. According to Farid Bhakkari, at one occasion during Humayun's stay in Persia, Shah Tahmasp asked him as to what were the reasons for his defeat at the hands of Sher Shah when he had at his disposal the services of such loyal and competent officers as Bairam Khan and others. Humayun's reply was that he found himself helpless as the Afghan population in India was very large and all of them fully supported Sher Shah. The Shah thereupon

advised Humayun that after re-establishing himself at Delhi he should take steps to forge an alliance with the Hindu chiefs and see to it that the Afghans were completely excluded from power. Farid Bhakkari rounds off this anecdote with the observation that if Humayun had not died suddenly in 1555, he would also have the same measures regarding the Rajputs as those of Akbar.<sup>14</sup>

However one immediate factor which might have induced Akbar in 1562 to offer attractive conditions of service to the Rajputs was his disgust of the Turani nobility. Akbar's alienation from Turani officers, who till this time represented the vast majority of the Mughal nobility, manifested itself in the form of repeated rebellions in early sixties. It is worth noting that there occurred, in all, five major rebellions during the short span of five years extending from 1562 to 1567 and all of them were staged by the Turani nobles. Even the rebellion of the Uzbek officers, which was led by Ali Quli Khan, who himself had a Persian background, was in reality the rebellion of the whole clan of the Uzbek officers serving under Akbar, most of whom were Turanis.<sup>15</sup>

During these years of crises (1562-67) in Akbar's relations with the dominant section of his nobility, he resorted to various measures to bring forth speedily a new set of influential but loyal officers who would extend their unqualified support to the central authority in putting down the Turani nobles. To achieve this aim Akbar seems to have turned for co-operation towards three groups, the Khurasanis, the Indian Muslims and the Rajputs. While the Khurasanis, whose strength in the lower grades was already considerable, were given rapid promotions, special efforts were made to induct the two other groups as well in the Mughal service. The simultaneous manifestations, in 1562-67, of 'liberal' and 'fanatical' attitudes in the state policy can be easily explained in this perspective. While measures like the abolition of *Jiziah* and Pilgrimage Tax were aimed at winning the good-will of the Rajputs, the persecution of the so-called heretics, the Mahdavis and Shiites, show of excessive respect to Sunni divines and the extension of the scope of the state patronage in the form of *madad-i-ma'ash* grants to as large a section of the Indian Muslims as possible, were designed to win over the sympathy and active co-operation of the Shaikhzadas, the socio-religious elite of the Indian Muslims.<sup>16</sup>

Apparently, in the beginning Akbar's appeal to the Shaikhzadas was more successful, while the Rajputs were a bit reluctant, which possibly, induced him to offer to the latter exceptionally favourable conditions of service. For instance while an ordinary noble would be entirely dependent for his position and income on the will of the king, a Rajput officer on the other hand would have, in addition to his *jagir*, a steady income from his ancestral

*zamindari*. This *zamindari* would remain his charge and, ordinarily the Emperor would not interfere in its administration. Moreover, the contingent of a Rajput noble, which he would maintain from the income of his *jagir*, would mostly consist of his own clansmen, who would be devoted to his person. In other words, he would be entitled to maintain his clansmen primarily devoted to his person in his service from the resources placed at his disposal by the Emperor. Such a choice was not always given to the ordinary nobles, particularly, those of foreign origin. In fact, the latter policy was one of the issues round which a dispute arose between Akbar and the Turani nobles. It would appear that Akbar had a deliberate policy of not allowing the officers belonging to the same clan to remain concentrated in one region. An exception was made by him in this respect only for the new Indian entrants in the service, particularly, the Rajputs.<sup>17</sup>

In any case, a closer look at the chronology of Akbar's relations with the Rajput chiefs would reveal that most of the leading Rajput princes joined Akbar's service after 1567. The main exception in this respect were the Kachwahs of Amber, a small autonomous *zamindari* in North Rajputana, who accepted the service in 1561. However, within three years of the fall of Chittor in 1567, most of the important princes of Rajputana (excepting the Sisodias) and many in other regions joined the ranks of the Mughal nobility. During the subsequent period of ten years they received rapid promotions and were entrusted with important commands.

Curiously enough, while Akbar failed to induce any considerable section of the Rajput princes to enter the Mughal service during 1562-67, a period marked by a radically liberal and tolerant attitude towards Hindus, he did succeed in achieving the same goal after 1567 when there actually took place a marked retrogression in his attitude in matters pertaining to religion. The attack upon Chittor in 1567 was looked upon by socio-religious elite of the Muslims as a victory of Islam over Hindu power, and Akbar was not averse to use this sentiment to consolidate his position among the Muslim upper classes. For example the *fathnama* issued after his victory at Chittor was couched in such aggressive language that it could compete favourably with similar documents issued during the reigns of the most orthodox of the Muslim rulers. There is available yet another document of roughly the same period, a *farman* addressed to the *muhtasib* of Bilgram, which confirms the impression that the attitude of tolerance towards Hindus so clearly manifest in 1562-64 was combined after 1567 with the adoption of an orthodox policy. The policy of Akbar in not scotching from its origin the attempt at the re-imposition of *jiziah* in 1575 was a manifestation of this contradictory attitude. Not long afterwards the doors of the Ibadat Khana were thrown open to non-Muslims. But the most interesting aspect of this situation was that despite an

atmosphere of religious intolerance and even bigotry at the Mughal court, the Rajput chiefs willingly joined the ranks of the Mughal nobles and their ranks and influence grew steadily.

From this, one may gather that in political matters the Rajput chiefs had little use for religion. Apparently, the considerations which induced them to join the Mughal service were anything but religious or doctrinal. The current ideological postures at the court did not affect their fortunes materially. Their position in the political structure was not determined by the doctrinal manipulations at the top but actually reflected the transformation that was taking place in the basic character of the imperial authority as a result of the extension of its social base. The enlightened religious postures of Akbar must have to some extent, facilitated this process, and he was in his own turn influenced by it.

The period of Akbar's enlightened measures actually starts from 1580 when there took place a final rupture between the king and the orthodoxy. The factors which brought about this rupture need to be examined separately. It would be difficult to attempt such an analysis here. However, the final rejection of the attempt to impose *jiziah* once again, dismissal and banishment of Abdun Nabi and Makhdumul Mulk, the abolition of central *sadarat*, ban on the slaughter of cows and many other similar measures which were subsequently introduced paved the way for the unfolding of the state policies based on the principles of *sulh-i kul*. Simultaneously, having armed himself with religious authority through the *mahzar*, Akbar started the system of combining, on an eclectic basis, the practices and beliefs of different religions. These developments were not so much an index of the influence of the Hindu chiefs in the Mughal polity. The Hindu chiefs, most of whom themselves were orthodox followers of their own faith, had no interest in the unorthodox views that were getting currency at the court. This intellectual ferment was more in the nature of a freak victory that the non-conformism could achieve in the history of Indian Islam. Abul Fazl, one of the chief exponents of the new ideology, characterises the phenomenon as the victory of intellect (*aql*) over dogmatism (*taqlid*).<sup>19</sup> It is, however, symptomatic that in the religious debate that raged at Akbar's court during 1575-81, the Hindu chiefs who had already gained high positions at the court remained indifferent. The only known instance of a Rajput prince taking interest in the current debate was a rather stupid remark by a certain chief, Deb Chand, the ruler of Manjhola, which, according to Badauni, threw the learned assembly into a fit of laughter.<sup>20</sup> If we read Abul Fazl's account carefully it becomes evident that although the main edge of his criticism was directed against Muslim orthodoxy, he has not spared Hindus either. For example Abul Fazl has denounced Todar Mal, for his

bigotry.<sup>20</sup> The understanding of an average Hindu noble regarding the experiments in intellectual enlightenment that Akbar was making after 1580 can be gauged by Man Singh's reply to an offer to enrol himself in the circle of Akbar's spiritual followers. The Rajput chief is reported to have said: "If discipleship means willingness to sacrifice one's life, I have already carried my life in hand, what need is there of proof? If, however, the term has another meaning and refers to faith, I certainly am a Hindu. If you order me so, I will become a Musalman, but I know not of the existence of any other religion than these two."<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion it may be emphasised again that Akbar's attitude in matters pertaining to religion seems to have only marginal bearing on the basic principles according to which he organised his Empire, giving the Rajput chiefs a share in power. Such a development was facilitated, mainly, by the process of gradual Indianization of the Sultanate and the extension of its social base resulting from the steadily increasing involvement of the *zamindars* in the affairs of the Empire. Apparently, from Akbar's time onward, the Mughal Empire developed as a joint concern of a number of ruling groups in which the Rajputs and other chiefs representing *zamindar* interests shared about one third of the total spoils.<sup>22</sup> This feature of the Mughal power in India grew more and more prominent with the passage of time. The process certainly continued until long after the petering out of the intellectual trends set in motion by Akbar.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> VINCENT SMITH, *Akbar the Great Mogul (1542-1605)*, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1958, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> ABUL KALAM AZAD, *Tazkira*, Lahore, new edition, pp. 264-68; AZIZ AHMAD, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford, 1964, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> S. R. SHARMA, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, Bombay, 1962, second edition, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> ABDUL QADAR BADAUNI, *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, Vol. III, p. 80.

<sup>5</sup> ATHAR ALI, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzib*, Asia Publishing House, 1966.

<sup>6</sup> According to Athar Ali, conferment of *watan jagirs* which ensured succession in the service with high *mansabs*, was practically confined to *zamindars* who were mainly Rajputs. Cf. *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzib*, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Nurul Hasan, *Sahifa-i Nat-i Muhammadi of Ziya-uddin Barani*, *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> By Akbar's time this notion had been further re-inforced. While defending Akbar's policy of befriending and recruiting the Rajput chiefs in the Mughal service, Arif Qandahari, a sixteenth century chronicler, clearly states that it was impossible to suppress the *zamindars*. He further makes the following very significant statement:

"There are nearly two or three hundred *zamindar* chiefs. Their suppression is very difficult as they possess strong forts. If they are able to hold on to each one of the forts say for six months or one year they can be contented about their safety for the next two or three hundred years." Cf. 'Arif Qandahari, *Tarikh-i-Akbari*, Rampur, 1962, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> Compare, Ziya-uddin Barani, *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*, ed. Shaikh Abdul Rashid, p. 121 and *Fatawa-i Jahandari*, tr. by Afsar Afzaluddin, Allgarh, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> ABDUL QADAR BADAUNI, *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, II, p. 66.

<sup>11</sup> *Afzal-ut Tawarikh*, MS., British Museum, Or. 4678, p. 116b.



## AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS POLICY

- <sup>12</sup> ABUL FAZL, *Akbar Nama*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. III, p. 247.
- <sup>13</sup> AHSAN RAZA KHAN, Babur's Settlement of His Conquests in Hindustan, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1967.
- <sup>14</sup> FARID BHAKKARI, *Zakhirat al-Khawanin*, Vol. I, Karachi, 1961, pp. 103-104.
- <sup>15</sup> IQTIDAR ALAM KHAN, The Nobility under Akbar and the development of his Religious Policy, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1968.
- <sup>16</sup> *op. cit.*
- <sup>17</sup> Compare, Iqtidar Alam Khan, *The Political Biography of a Mughal Noble: Mun'im Khan Khan-i-Khanan*, Orient Longman, 1973. XVII-XVIII. Several cases of Turani clans dispersed by Akbar are discussed.
- <sup>18</sup> *Akbar Nama*, Vol. III, p. 253.
- <sup>19</sup> ABDUL QADAR BADAUNI, *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 211. "Deb Chand, Raja Maujholah—that fool—once set the whole court in laughter by saying that Allah after all had great respect for cows, else the cow would not have been mentioned in the first chapter of the Qur'an."
- <sup>20</sup> *Akbar Nama*, Vol. III, p. 569.
- <sup>21</sup> *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 364.
- <sup>22</sup> Compare Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzib*, p. 31, wherein the strength of the Hindu nobles in Aurangzib's service during the last 28 years of his reign is estimated as 31.6% of the total number of the *mansabdars*.





# French Attitude to Sivaji: Some Observations

DR. ANIRUDDHA RAY

ALTHOUGH the accounts and official papers of foreigners who came to India have received wide attention in recent years, a systematic analysis of the sources however has not yet been done. This is much more evident in case of Sivaji since European sources are abundant on his life and activities.

From the early 20th century, scholars began the collection of European sources on Sivaji. Rawlinson and Patawardhan's rather tentative collection (*Sources of Maratha History*, Vol. I, 1919) can be termed as one of the earliest attempts in such a direction. This is followed by Surendra Nath Sen's lone effort, almost staggering in the use of four language records, in 1929, in the publication of *Foreign Biographies of Sivaji*. In both these works or rather collections of French and other sources, use has been made, for the first time, of the voluminous and then unknown accounts of two Frenchmen—Carré and François Martin, both of whom have since received wide publicity. While Rawlinson and Patawardhan mainly tried to present the non-Maratha sources, in the midst of nationalist publications of Maratha records (see the similar historiographical situation in Bengal regarding the revolts of petty zamindars of eastern Bengal against the Mughals<sup>1</sup>), Sen's method has been more to show the diverse opinions held by the Europeans visiting India during Sivaji's lifetime or immediately after. That the age of collection was not yet over, was proved by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, who, in his *House of Sivaji* (Calcutta, 1950) concentrated on the families of Sivaji, partly relying on the invaluable but by then published diary of F. Martin.<sup>2</sup> Sarkar therefore arranges to disperse the image so far concentrated in the person of Sivaji, at the same time working out the biographical limits of the family rather than trying to sketch the system that brought such glory to Marathas as done by Sen.<sup>3</sup> In this diversified approach the traditional method remains biographical, followed by the classical and nationalist school of historians while the new one is institutional, where the process throws the light on the hero

indirectly, and always in relation to the central foci. In both these however the different European sources were lumped together forming one homogeneous whole. Finally, after a time, the two methods, biographical and institutional, merge to bring out the studies, equally important, of a singular pattern known as *External Relations*. Prof. V. G. Hatakar's patient undertaking of the *French and the Marathas* (Bombay 1958), interesting and informative, falls in such a pattern, although Sivaji is present there only in his shadows.

In this brief article, with an apology for the absence of Sivaji in his nation-building role, an attempt would be made to analyse the trend of the French writings on Sivaji, with their particular bias and methods. In such an attempt, neither the chronological framework of Sivaji nor the different controversies raised would be looked into. Rather, the attempt would be to understand the attitude of the writings of the French, from Tavernier to the end of 18th century, with some new sources thrown in between.

The earliest French writer is Tavernier,<sup>4</sup> the well-known traveller-cum-jeweller, whose brief account has unfortunately been edited by a lazy and unwilling French historian at Paris under the order of Louis XIV. This is unfortunate in the sense that Tavernier's notorious escapades have been read by later writers, who were thus influenced by the work of the editor. Moreover, Tavernier, leaving India for the last time in 1666 after his sixth visit, was most impressed by the splendour of the Mughals and had no hesitation in ascribing the rise of the 'Naik Sivaji' to the latter's personal resentment against the King of Bijapur for the imprisonment of his father—a trend of thought evidently current at the time as Thevenot, another French traveller, seemed to repeat it. Tavernier however clearly found Sivaji a 'chief of the bandits' while the increase of his army was due to his liberality—a common theme of reporting the activities of a rebel in medieval India. Significantly, Tavernier did not mention the ancestry of Sivaji nor the manner of his gaining the treasure to be used for 'liberality'. Only when the King of Bijapur died without children, could Sivaji conquer large areas which coincided with his finding the legendary 'treasure'. Tavernier, an ardent supporter of the legal monarchy, concluded the account of Sivaji by making him a vassal of Bijapur—an account in which the splendour and prosperity of the Mughals do not confront and thus do not suffer at the hands of a rebel Sivaji.

The splendour and the might of the Mughal is partly on the wane in the writing of Thevenot<sup>5</sup> visiting India immediately after Tavernier's departure. In his account, brilliantly annotated by Surendra Nath Sen, Thevenot begins the chapter with the heading 'Of the Irruption of Sivaji'<sup>6</sup>—a chapter that retains the basic concepts of Tavernier while bringing out the good qualities of the rebel. Basing on the Portuguese source, Cosma da Guarda, regarding the place of birth (wrongly mentioned by him as Basseim),<sup>7</sup> Thevenot follows

Tavernier regarding the rise of Sivaji, labelling him as a bandit and mentioning his date of birth as 1625. His account incorporates Tavernier's till the coming of Shaista Khan, an event which Tavernier briefly mentions. Thereafter Thevenot brings us new information regarding the plunder of Surat, which, according to him, Sivaji first reconnoitred in the garb of a Fakir. That advance planning and surprise were the basic elements of Sivaji's manoeuvres and factors of success, in contrast to that of the Mughals, is ably demonstrated by Thevenot, who, however, was convinced of the superiority of the defence of Christians and the holiness of the Capucin Fathers at Surat—sword and gospel looming in the background of the racy biography of Thevenot. The superiority of the Christians in the waning of the proverbial power of the Mughals, first introduced by Thevenot in the French sources although hinted by Tavernier earlier, continued to dominate the accounts of his successors. Thus the splendour of the Mughals, so ably demonstrated by Tavernier receives a critical appraisal by Thevenot, who then recounts, in picturesque and romantic detail the escape of Sivaji from Agra, throwing suspicion on Aurangzeb—a story that has been repeated later by others. Meanwhile, Bernier picks up the thread of the superiority of the French administration in substitution to Christianity and in contrast to that of the Mughals.

Actually, Bernier<sup>8</sup> belongs to the same period as Thevenot though he came much earlier than him. Bernier's very brief account contains nothing of importance except that he casually called Sivaji a Hindu 'rebel of Visapour'. In his inconsequential and brief account, he dwelled at length on the brave display of power by the Europeans (the French were absent then) and the cowardice of the Indians. The respect shown by Sivaji to the Christian Father Ambrose as well as sparing the house of a deceased Dalal of the Dutch contained the message of the justness of the Christian faith and a lurking hint that good and just people did not suffer. If we remember that Bernier was consciously writing from the viewpoint of the court of one King to another, with a scale of comparison carefully balanced against the Mughals, we might get an inkling of his bias, his selection of facts and his manner of presentation. As we have seen, the travellers, up to the end of the decade of the 60's were not bothered with the ancestry of Sivaji, not calling him anything else than a rebel. The next decade would see this involvement as the newly established French Company decided to cast its net far and wide in India.

It is significant that Bernier, so much detailed in his admirable *Memoir to Colbert*<sup>9</sup> on trade and politics in 1668, did not mention Sivaji. The contact with Sivaji and the French came in 1668 as two French agents went hunting for pepper in Rajapur. Prof. Hatakar's work in English brings this out clearly and there is no need for us to repeat the known facts. We would then pass

first to Carré, whose account was supposed to be the first French biography on Sivaji by a Frenchman, written in part in 1668 and published in 1699.<sup>10</sup>

Carré<sup>11</sup> opens his account of Sivaji in his first volume with a homage to Sivaji as 'one of the greatest warriors that Orient has seen for a long time', comparing him with Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. But Carré's viewpoint does not differ from the earlier ones as he writes in the same paragraph of the heroic fight of the French nation and their aptitude to trade—perhaps intended to be a sop to Colbert who had sent him there on spying mission. Since this has been translated in English by Surendra Nath Sen, we would present only the trend of his writings.

Clearly identifying Aurangzeb as a tyrant with no right to the throne, Carré accounts the presence of Shaista Khan in the Deccan to Aurangzeb's thirst for conquest. Bijapur submits to the Mughal while the Chief Minister, Sivaji, disagrees with such a decision. This disagreement, on an impersonal issue, in the background of the invasion of Aurangzeb and the cowardice of the King and ministers of Bijapur, brings out Sivaji in a favourable light and justifies his actions thereafter. Here, therefore, the resentment is impersonal, practically absolving Sivaji of the guilt of the revolt and is a departure from that of Tavernier.

This favourable attitude is shown also when Carré finds Sivaji extremely rich and of good heart—a combination that Carré usually reserves for the Princes he admires. He distributes to the soldiers large amounts of money, which makes the soldiers contented and well-disposed towards the adventures of Sivaji—the question of Marathas as a nation not figuring in Carré at all. This kind of contrast, a typical medieval European formulation<sup>12</sup> is present in the encounter with Shaista Khan. Carré swayed by the idea of splendour of the Mughals à la Tavernier, pictures Shaista Khan and his soldiers abandoning themselves to luxury and feasts, which, in any case, was hardly possible for the poor soldiers of the Mughal Empire, if we follow Bernier,<sup>13</sup> evidently not read by Carré so far. But Carré has taken the precaution of removing the best soldiers of Shaista Khan to a far distance. His picture of Sivaji's troops, efficient, contented and well-controlled—contrasts sharply with the undisciplined and confused mass of the Mughal army and is consistent with his approach to Sivaji and his times. Carré then gives a final historiographical direction to the career of Sivaji by commenting that "when one has revolted once against one's legitimate Prince, it is for all the time"—thus hinting at the finality of the revolt. The question of legitimacy of the revolt still bothers Carré to some extent.<sup>14</sup>

Carré then moves on to Sivaji's attack on Surat and, as is usual with him, he immediately presents a background—this time the condition at Surat—to provide a contrast and the cause of Sivaji's success.

The inhabitants of Surat, according to Carré, were Hindu and Jain merchants, having very little experience of war and deeply immersed in the philosophy of Pythagoras—of the horror of blood—while Surat was without defence to stop an army. The Governor was a coward while his army was without proper order. Sivaji, with his well trained soldiers marching at night, entered one by one in Surat and on a given signal started the pillage. Thus he differed from the predecessors in his account of Sivaji's approach to Surat as well as in preparing the readers of the outcome—slowly building up the tension. As usual also, the Christian Fathers were supposed to have been spared for their holiness while the European nations were not attacked for their bravery—the gospel and the cannon formula is still being worked out. Carré added however that Sivaji's respect to the Europeans might be due to his calculation that he might need them in future—an idea that occasionally comes to the surface also in the writings of Dellon, another French traveller. After this, when the entire country was terrorised by Sivaji, Carré changed his term 'rebel' and instead tried to emphasise the building of the 'state' by Sivaji, who, according to his own experience, also encouraged all sorts of trade with the Europeans. Here also, the concept of the European bravery remained steadfast: "It was an effect of his politique; but it was also an inclination that he had for the people of Europe and particularly for our Nation, whom he esteemed by the renown that it had everywhere as the most warlike Nation of the world",<sup>15</sup> evidently written with an eye for the Sun King.

By this time, of course, the rebel has been changed to Julius Caesar and Sivaji is now also a man with great deal of diplomatic tact—now face to face, in the account of Carré, with the crafty Emperor of the Mughals. Aurangzeb, who invites Sivaji to the Mughal court to fight against the Persians. Due to the wife of Shaista Khan, Aurangzeb treated him badly—an element that would crop up later in another French account by Father Orleons, writing after the death of Sivaji. Carré then recounts hastily the second sack of Surat merely repeating the old theme—the cowardice of the Mughal army, the treachery of the Governor and the bravery of the Europeans, this time the French. Carré's first volume thus ends with a happy note on Sivaji, who had already built up a state—a departure from the previous French writers who had seen him only as a rebel.

This theme is taken up by Carré in his second volume<sup>16</sup> (Sequel to the History of Sivaji) where he opened the account with the statement that Sivaji had "established the Kingdom". His account of Sivaji's dealings with Bijapur and Afzal Khan did not contain anything new, excepting that in this volume, Carré was not feeling surprised in the way actions were taking place. But his manner of presentation—that of contrast—persisted as he recounted the lack

of preparation at Daman in 1672 while Sivaji's embassy was marching on with well-ordered cavalry. Sivaji, however, continued to conquer and managed to take the country from Goa to Chaul and acquired immense riches. Carré ended with the beginning of Sivaji's involvement at Karnataka on which we have the detailed account of another French writer, François Martin, already translated in English.<sup>17</sup>

From 1688, the French Company was firmly established at Surat and since then we have the accounts and letters of the agents and other officials of the Company. The earliest, Dellon,<sup>18</sup> leaving Surat in 1670, referred to Sivaji as a 'famous rebel, who had kept the Grand Mogol occupied for a long time'. Then he described him, as the 'most powerful Prince, who had taken advantage of his fortune'. But then, Dellon still retained an impression about a salient European characteristic, i.e., valour, although he seemed to be in doubt about this as a characteristic. He was the only one who paid the compliment to Sivaji's secularity: "His subjects are Hindus as him, but he accepts all sorts of religion and is one of the greatest politicians of the country",<sup>19</sup> perhaps an unconscious contrast with the religion and politics of Louis XIV. His brief mention of terror at Surat is then carried by Baron, the French director, who in January 1672,<sup>20</sup> in an unpublished letter, assured the Home Office, that although Surat is defended by eight persons only, yet he "still has very secret correspondences with Sivaji. This Prince shows mark of esteem everyday that he has for the Company." In another letter from Surat dated July 25, 1672,<sup>21</sup> Baron continued in the same vein, with his admiration towards Sivaji increasing. One must mention that he does not either consider Sivaji as a King with a State nor does he commit himself to calling Sivaji a rebel—a matter-of-fact approach to reality in which the concepts of the travellers had hardly any place. By December 20, 1672,<sup>22</sup> Baron's admiration for Sivaji had grown tremendously and he took care to explain that Sivaji's cause of success, rather his exploitation of the advantage, was due to the preoccupation of Aurangzeb with the Pathans. Baron also receives information from one of the confidants of Sivaji that if the Mughal-Pathan war continues, Sivaji would march to Coromandel, which he did later.

Thus, in the letters from the factories, from the viewpoint of the merchant, the geo-political environment of Sivaji are brought out. Sometime after, Baron did try to form an alliance between Sivaji, Bijapur and the French<sup>23</sup> which however did not materialise. The approach of the merchants, therefore, revealed that they were more eager to take advantage of Sivaji rather than bother with his ancestry as done by the travellers.

An account, written in 1672, by a French traveller Sr. l'Estra<sup>24</sup> brings this out clearly. He puts him "in the race of the ancient Emperors of the Indies and a relative of the Grand Mogol"—a departure from the previous

decade. But, by that time, sufficient attention has been paid to the milieu in which Sivaji operates and Sr. l'Estra acknowledges, in the midst of admiring Sivaji, that his people "are belligerent and villainous, living only on rapine and piracy". Yet with all this, according to Sr. l'Estra, Sivaji levies 'taxes on the merchants of Surat annually for five years'.

Thus Sr. l'Estra, moving away from his predecessors, keeps the trend of 'piracy', which he emphasizes here with proper identification. But he remains much more rooted to the approach of the previous decade when he describes the 'pillage' of Surat for the second time. Here he has no hesitation in ascribing to Sivaji the demolition of a big part of the city and the valiant defence of the French—as if the defence of the west by civilised men against barbarians—a heritage of the part of the Græco-Roman world, grappling with the Orient. Thus the position taken becomes much more definite but contradictory—the postulate of barbarian attack on civilised west and the genealogy of noble birth, as if the element of success depends on nobility yet by a method not approved of.

This botheration with genealogy, this hunt for noble birth and the concept of pillage continue in the decade of the '70's. In 1679 we find André Bourreau-Deslandes<sup>25</sup> writing from the ship *l'autour* anchored at Rajapur on December 4.<sup>26</sup> After making Sivaji a Brahmin, the traveller slowly traces the history of a rebel to an established King. "His kingdom is much extensive . . . he is a man of 55 or 60 years, man of great judgement, personally very brave and very much vigilant." But the traveller does not forget the potentialities of the situation and he squarely blames Sivaji for ruining Rajapur entirely—'pillage' concept continuing. His lamentation for the loss of French trade, due to the continuous movement of Sivaji's troops, 'which prevented the liberty of commerce' makes the approach basically commerce-oriented and comes closer to those of the agents. Here he gloats upon the fact that Sivaji was particularly friendly to the French and had visited their factory—a situation which should be exploited. Thus this 'journal' coming from a traveller, remains a mixed one—bothering with genealogy on the one hand and outlining the exploitation of the situation on the other.

The merchant however is in the ascendant if we look at the Karnataka expedition of Sivaji so elaborately described by Martin stationed at Pondicherry. Here, he finds the lower level of the administration of Sivaji absolutely corrupt and tyrannical and he clearly blames the Brahmin administrators of Sivaji. This concept of tyranny of the lower level of Sivaji's administration is a development of the idea of 'pillage' which Martin unfailingly notes in his journey from Surat to Masulipatam in 1670.<sup>27</sup> Thus the agent and the traveller merge on the idea of pillage and the ruin of the potentialities of the trade—a concept that Martin later places in an analysis of the crumbling of



the Mughal Empire and the revolts within. But Martin then sees the revolts as essentially the work of the Rajas as he calls Sivaji in 1670 as "a raja or an Indian Prince of the lands of Bijapur".<sup>28</sup> By November 1670, Martin has been calling him as the 'famous Raja Sivaji' in connection with the second attack on Surat, referring to his followers as rebels.<sup>29</sup> After 1674, Martin refers to him merely as 'Sivaji' who is by then established within his system—a system through which, as an agent of the Company, Martin tries very hard, and succeeds partly, to gain maximum advantage. His practical approach, almost bordering on admiration, comes out best in a short description, which he again repeats in a *Mémoire* of 1700,<sup>30</sup> many years after the death of Sivaji. But by that time, Martin sees Sivaji and the Marathas essentially as part of the anarchy of the Mughal Empire, although he concedes their status of kingdom. To quote from the *Mémoire* of 1700: "Among all the people who desolate the country, the Marathas cause the most disorder".<sup>31</sup> Needless to say that this was not there in such a form in the 1670's when Sivaji made his Karnataka expedition. But by 1700, Martin could and did put the Marathas as one piece in the chessboard of the crumbling Mughal Empire—a part of anarchy where a number of powerful Rajas were pillaging the merchants and seizing the caravans with the countryside falling under their control.<sup>32</sup> a sort of approach made by Bernier nearly forty years earlier. Bernier perhaps was carrying into his account, his memories of civil war, witnessed a decade before he wrote the book; Martin on the other hand makes a prophecy a decade earlier than its fruition. Both come to the same point, but perhaps Bernier does it by hindsight, Martin by prophecy.

This transfer of concept or its continuation in a different and developed form is best seen in the account of Father Orleons<sup>33</sup> which is a mixture of Portuguese letters from Goa, a part of Carré and much of Tavernier and Thevenot—a kind of mixture which seems to suggest that he had never visited Hindustan.

Father Orleons accounts the rise of Sivaji, a captain of the troops of "Idal Kaan, King of Bijapur", due to his lack of promotion—once again a personal cause. After this, following Tavernier, he relates that Sivaji retired to the mountains 'with a troop of vagabonds', desolating Bijapur and creating a state—the only departure from Tavernier. Significantly, in following Thevenot and Carré, Orleons does not emphasise the Christian and western superiority and refers Sivaji as 'King' once the 'state' is created.

These same trends appear also in the writings of the French travellers in 18th century India and we can refer to at least two travellers in late 18th century India. Pierre Sonnerat,<sup>34</sup> a careful observer, travelled in India between 1774 and 1781. He starts his account with a most fanciful genealogy of Sivaji—Shahji was the youngest son of a woman named Bhonsla, mistress

of a Rana of Udaipur. Because of his birth, Shahji moved to Bijapur, where Sivaji was born in 1628. Soon after, Sivaji left Bijapur due to the dissension and proclaimed independence. He then conquered Deccan up to Jinjee although Aurangzeb conquered a part of this before the death of Sivaji in 1680.

Count de Modave's (who travelled in 1773-1776),<sup>35</sup> very brief account opens with admiration for Sivaji ("one of the bravest and most singular men that India has ever produced"). Modave's distinction lies in the fact that he easily identifies Bernier's writings as the court style and criticises his casual reference of a 'certain rebel of Bijapur'. What is perhaps surprising in Modave is that he calls the Marathas a 'nation', for whose liberty, Sivaji, the hereditary king of the Marathas, had valiantly fought and gloriously succeeded—a view completely absent in the accounts of previous writers travelling in the same period. If we look at Modave's personal bias which is fiercely anti-English, pro-French but highly individualistic and aristocratic—the bias of an adventurous feudal lord of late medieval India failing in almost all the projects embarked upon, we may understand the departure from the accepted writings. This bias then takes the form of a hero-worship of Sivaji in a theme of the lone fighter for the liberty of the people. There is thus an extremism in Modave in which not the genealogy or high birth of Sivaji but the activity, the work of the life-long struggle of the individual, dominates. The obvious concern for the individual and the people (use of the 'nation' for the first time by the French in India, although they have used it earlier in their own reference) as well as the successful struggle of the hereditary king, point to us Modave's linkage with his French background—the background of the aristocratic revival and legal monarchy in face of the coming revolution in France. This is quite a departure from the previous traveller, Sonnerat, a bourgeois, who placidly and contentedly relies on the old theme. Modave's explanation of the submission of Sivaji comes closer to his own experience in India<sup>36</sup>—the loss of the allies, Bijapur and Golconda, making the Marathas vulnerable to the Mughals—the external circumstances deciding the fortune of the fighter submitting to the enemy, with his successes behind him, for the sake of his people. Thus, in the traditional system of Sonnerat, Sivaji's successes and failures are not taken on a personal basis while Modave builds up a system, on his own experience, where his identification with the hero of the Marathas has a new meaning.

Reviewing the 17th and 18th century data on French biographical accounts of Sivaji, one can discern two approaches—that of the French travellers in India and that of the agents of French trade. The French travellers found Sivaji a significant historical phenomenon, which they considered in its entirety, trying to locate him in the context of Mughal and Bijapur history. In this broad span, details about Sivaji's biography were overlooked. In the

case of the agents, worrying over trade prospects with Maharashtra, the concern was regarding the immediate present, i.e., the need to extract as much concessions and advantage from Sivaji as was possible. To the agent, Sivaji was a source to be exploited. These two types of interests explain dominant biases—the travellers' bias and the agents' bias.

In between these two polarised biases, there was a spectrum of different historiographical attitudes, in which biases intermingle according to the personal interests of the writer. For instance, the merchant and Director, Baron considered political questions, moving far beyond purely the mercantile ones, while Sr. l'Estra in a traveller's 'Journal' attempted both the broad span and detailed and direct hints about Sivaji's problems. Such an intermingling of biases is also found in another 'Journal' of André Bourreau-Deslandes.

One clue to the intermingling of biases is to be found in the fact that both travellers and agents became increasingly concerned with the fact of what they, as contemporaries of Aurangzeb's times, experienced as 'pillage'. This increase of looting and plunder, and growing turbulence on the roads, was both a political and economic problem. The more percipient observer, whether travellers or agents, could see in this immediate phenomenon, i.e., what they came to call 'anarchy' and as time went on, and the Mughal Empire began to crumble, both travellers and agents began to relate 'pillage' in which the Marathas played a leading part, with the dissolution of the Mughal Empire. The change from the immediate perception of 'pillage' to the more generalised condition of the Mughal Empire will be found from Bernier to the later writers. Bernier and Tavernier mention "a certain rebel" living with the 'bandits'. The later writers emphasised the 'state' of Raja Sivaji's kingdom and began to bother themselves with the genealogy of the Raja, often cooking up fanciful tales. By hindsight, they read into the mid 17th century, the later reality of Maratha parallel government of Tara Bai and the Peshwas' times.

As the French writers began to generalise about Sivaji's position within the Mughal Empire, they also emphasised the Europeans' war-like resistance and the magical effects of Christianity. But nothing succeeds like success, and in the 18th century, a critical evaluation of Sivaji gives way to admiration so that by the late 18th century, in the writings of Modave, Sivaji has become a hero, identified with the frustration and ideals of a European feudal baron; the word 'nation' has already been uttered by Modave, although it is not to be found in the more proximate 17th century sources.

Sivaji, the man, remains distant in all these sources. The agents, like Martin, tried to understand his methods and activities in their milieu, endeavouring to grasp the roots of his success. But the travellers, more concerned

## FRENCH ATTITUDE TO SIVAJI

with the Sivaji legend went on to generalise, comparing for instance the miserable fate of Rajapur, with the greatness of Europe.

Consequently, the point of this paper has been to show that even in contemporary accounts of foreign travellers, and even more so in accounts a hundred years later, Sivaji is described through the refraction of various veneers of prejudice. The point in this paper has been to warn modern historians against writing accounts of medieval Indian figures such as Sivaji, on the basis of foreign travellers' sources, without discounting, the element of national prejudice, which may be found by analysing the accounts of foreign travellers in the language in which they were written, and not relying only on old translated accounts. It is also a case for critically analysing the sources on Sivaji before endeavouring to evaluate him in National Seminars on the Chhatrapati.

### NOTES

[Summary Read at the National Seminar on Sivaji held at Delhi, January 1975]

<sup>1</sup> See for example the voluminous work of Mitra, S. C., *Jasohar-Khulner Itihas* (Bengali), 2 Vols., Calcutta, 1921-23 on the revolts of local zamindars, like Raja Pratapaditva and Raja Sitaram Ray of Jessore.

<sup>2</sup> Martin, François, *Mémoires*, 3 Vols., Paris, 1931-34.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Sen, Surendra Nath, *The Military System of the Marathas*, Calcutta, 1958.

<sup>4</sup> Tavernier, J. B., *Travels in India*, Ed. by V. Ball, 2 Vols., 1889, I, 182-3.

<sup>5</sup> Thevenot landed at Surat in January 1666. See, Sen, S. N., *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, New Delhi, 1949.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter XVI, 38-42 in *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 295, n. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Bernier arrived in India at the end of 1658 or early 1659. See, *Travels in the Mughal Empire, 1638-1668*, ed. by A. Constable, Delhi ed., 1972, 187-190.

<sup>9</sup> Published in Castonnet des Fosses, François Bernier, Paris, 1889, as *Mémoire sur l'établissement du commerce dans les Indes*, 11-30. He also wrote a letter to the Company where he did not mention Sivaji (See, *Ibid.*, 31-36, dt. March 10, 1668, Surat).

<sup>10</sup> Abbé Carré, *Voyages des Indes Orientales*, 2 Vols., Paris, 1699 (portions relating to Sivaji translated into English by Sen, S. N. in *Foreign Biographies of Sivaji*, Calcutta, 1929). Sir Jadunath Sarkar claimed that the account of Father Orleans was the first printed French biography of Sivaji (1688) (*Sivaji*, 6th ed., 1961, 398). This is not correct as Thevenot's sketch appeared from Paris in 1684. Freoidevaux, H., in his edition of *Mémoires de L. A. Bellanger de Lespinay*, Vendôme, 1895, 81, fn. 1, claimed that Carré was the first French historian of Sivaji.

<sup>11</sup> All references are from the original French edition, I, 49-100.

<sup>12</sup> See Huizinga, J., *The waning of the Middle Ages*, N.Y., 1954, 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> Bernier, *op. cit.*, 381-2.

<sup>14</sup> Carré, *op. cit.*, I, 70.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>16</sup> All references are from the French edition, II, 1-85.

<sup>17</sup> See, Sen, S. N., *Foreign Biographies*, Chapter on Karnataka exped.

<sup>18</sup> Dellon, *Nouvelle Relation d'un voyage fait aux Indes Orientales*, Amsterdam, 1689 (written from 1669 to 1676), 75-77.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>20</sup> *Archives Nationales*, Paris, Colony C(2) 62, ff. 124-124v (ms), January 7, 1672.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 139-140v.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 316-317.

<sup>22</sup> Martin, *op. cit.*, II, 15-17 & 22-23. See the discussion in my article on "The Tragedy of Sher Khan Lody, a noble of 17th century Bijapur" in *The Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 34th session, 1973, I, 185-197.

<sup>23</sup> Sr. de l'Estra, *Relation ou Journal d'un Voyage Nouvellement fait aux Indes Orientales*, Paris, 1677. Sen, S. N. in his Introduction to *Foreign Biographies of Sivaji* had mistakenly called it anonymous. For the account of Sivaji in Sr. de l'Estra, see 53-57.

<sup>24</sup> *Journal du Voyage: Journal d'André Bourreau-Deslandes dans le Vautour à la côte de Malabar*, 1679, in Bibliothèque Nationale (niss), Paris, Marine B(4) 7, ff. 214-245. Sir Jadunath Sarkar stated that he had translated it into English in *Poona Mandal (Sivaji)*, 298).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, f. 221v. For details concerning Sivaji, see ff. 222-235.

<sup>26</sup> Martin left Surat in May and arrived at Hyderabad in June 1670. (*Mémoires*, I, pt. II, 252-261).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, I, 246.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, I, 293.

<sup>29</sup> *Mémoire* dated Pondicherry 15 February 1700, partly translated and annotated by me in *Bulletin of Islamic History and Culture*, Calcutta University, 1972, 57-70, under the title "Some Aspects of Medieval India."

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> This was the contention of Martin and other French merchants. See my case study of the revolt of Sobha Singh of Bengal in *Bengal Past and Present*, 1669, 210-222 and 1970, 58-73.

<sup>32</sup> P. P. Pierre Joseph d'Orléans, *Histoire des deux Conquerans qui ont subjugué la Chine*, chapter on Histoire du Sevagi et de son successeur, Paris, 1688. According to Robert Orme (*Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire*), this was written from Goa.

<sup>33</sup> M. Sonnerat, *Voyages aux Indes Orientales et la Chine*, 1774-81, Paris, 1786, 213-215.

<sup>34</sup> *Voyage en Inde du Comte de Modave*, 1773-1776, ed. by Jean Deloche, Paris, 1971, 394-395.

<sup>35</sup> See my review in *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. I, 1974, No. 2.

## **V    MODERN AFFAIRS**



# Complexities in the Relationships Between Nationalism, Capitalism and Colonialism

BARUN DE

IN a recent analysis of stresses and strains, consequent upon the imperfections of Western-style nationalism emulated in India, Professor Niharranjan Ray has postulated a "Western" archetype:

"an urban phenomenon brought about by a national bourgeoisie which happened to be the product of a highly-developed mercantile and a fast-developing industrial economy, somewhat homogeneous in its ethnic, linguistic and cultural composition and in its politico-economic aims and aspirations."

He says that a second-type of nationalism is generated in our country

"neither by a bourgeoisie of the Western connotations nor by the kind of socio-economic forces which were in operation in Europe of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century... That this imported concept could find a soil and strike its roots in India was due to the fact, first that India had been drawn into the colonial stream of nineteenth century British Indian polity and economy and secondly because of the geographical unity which was buttressed by the British into one central political authority, and one common administrative system, and thirdly the progress of its evolution was to an extent helped by the historically-conditioned over-all cultural unity at its lowest common measure... (albeit without) any effective role to play in a politico-economic vacuum."<sup>1</sup>

This statement may be refined to even more detailed conceptualisation about the origins, forms, and consequences of either of the two ways taken, in the development of nationhood and the character of internal variance



within each. The genesis and consequences of variance within what Professor Ray, in a first approximation, has taken as the Western prototype, can be clarified. Precision would then be more possible about the dialectical relations of freedom-struggle and nationalism, which were ignited by a colonialism, practised by the original type of nation-state which in the process of gestation, itself had become capitalist and colonialist, living by exploiting others.

Some previous work has already been done on the specifics of anti-colonialism in the second—or for our purposes, Indian—context.<sup>2</sup> This paper is a totally revised version of an earlier draft submitted in April-May, 1975 to the organizers of this volume. I had, in that draft, used the terms “first” and “second” ways of nationalism, as shorthand for two models of nationalist development, one capitalist and ultimately colonialist, the other, rickety in its capitalism due to colonial exploitation, or not capitalist at all, and anti-colonial in any case, in its essence. The terms *were not* used to refer to the unevenness of world capitalist development, which is what my colleague, Dr. Partha Chatterjee interpreted them to mean (*vide* his footnote 4 of “Bengal: Rise and Growth of a Nationality”, *Social Scientist*, August, 1975, No. 37). The present paper deals with the specifics and complexities of historical conceptualisation about Western European nationality, nationalism, nationhood, and the colonialist expansion in these stages.<sup>3</sup>

### I *A Description of Nationality:*

Any definition of nationalism, on universalist or general terms must first define its basic constituent—nationality. Otherwise nationalism would represent merely disembodied spirit, ideology without social composition, dogma without basic content.

It is true that such dogmas have sometimes gained the force of right wing political ideology. The *Action Française* of early 20th century France tried to inject into French nationality a spirit of excluding supposed *metèques*—Frenchmen, whom demagogues accused of lack of Gallicity, such as Jews from the time of the Dreyfus Affair, or later the men of Alsace.<sup>4</sup> Such chimacrac were only instrumental in motivating Maurras the intellectual father of this movement to accept the French national humiliation at Vichy from 1940 to 1945. Nazism, the most militant and chauvinist form of nationalism, based on the weird and uncouth racism of Adolf Hitler, logically led to the concentration camps and gas chambers, and hastened the doom of united Germany.<sup>5</sup> It is merely an exercise in circular logic to define nationalism as a heightened form of group affiliation of social consciousness, since ideology may be *sometimes* merely false consciousness produced by social retrograde elements within an existing nationality, which pervert it towards

either exclusion or genocide. No Indian reader can forget the anti-Indian Muslim content of the "Indianisation" slogan, which were recently preached by the RSS volunteers. Such nationalism ends up by destroying nationhood.

Prior to any heightening of nationhood towards ideology, one finds a conglomerate of behaviour or common practices, which may crystallise into nationality. For instance, English, Scottish or Welsh nationality all preceded British nationalism. In the U.S.A., to which people from very many alien nationalities have emigrated, feelings of a new nationhood have developed, as if in a melting pot. Where Peter the Great or the Meiji Restoration created nation-states such as Russian Tsardom or Nippon, either autocratically or oligarchically, there the national consciousness or national movements which bolstered such creation, could not have been possible without some popular acceptance of The Tsar as 'Little Father', or of the Tokyo ruler as Japanese Emperor. Such popular acceptance or power to impose particular unifying values on neighbours is the core of nationality. It can exist prior to the era of capitalism, or in some cases, even of feudalism.

This point may be explained by considering whether the city-states of Athens, or later, Rome, were disseminators of nationality, when they developed proto-imperial, or imperial forms. Even at Marathon, or during the Periclean Age, Athens had more than one type of citizens, distinguished by race—voters in the *Ekklesia*, as well as the original *metics*. The latter were resident aliens from dependencies or cities allied with Athens, such as Megara (from where hailed Aspasia the *hetaera*, Pericles' friend who could not share his political rights). As a result of the Delian Confederacy, Athens became a league of dependant settlements and areas of influence. The outcome of the Peloponnesian War turned Athens back into a city-state, bound always by civic pride and at its Periclean peak, also by imperial influence. At neither time, did the *metics* share any community of privileges with the Athenian citizens. The inegalitarian influence of this socially segmented city-state was the social content of the final Periclean crisis described by Thucydides in his *Peloponnesian War*. Athenian nationality was limited to the city-state. At utmost it represented the extent to which second class citizens accepted, without protest, the inegalitarian values of the first-class citizens. Any further development of a higher stage of nationality was impossible, so long as food-suppliers in the Delian periphery could not share the birthrights of theatre-going Athenian demagoguery. *Metics* of long-standing, and first class citizens developed over the years a common fund of memories, riven indeed by political distinctions in which the Athenian tradition was a linking, though not a mutually binding factor. The use of the term Athenian nationality, in fact shows its limitations, and points to the reasons for the decay of Athens.<sup>4</sup>

Italy was never integrated with the Roman Republic. Roman Senators, Consuls, and other hierarchial officials, *nobiles* and *principes* formed a ruling elite. This elite was superior in political influence over other Italian elite elements, and was divided from them by aristocratic Roman memories, which were separate from individual municipal memories of other Italian towns. Sir Ronald Syme has picked out a few such particularist family traditions: Etruscans remaining subordinate till after the Civil War, or Samnites who waged a bloody war and were practically extirpated by Sulla. He notes that only in the days of Cicero and Julius Caesar was the slogan heard, to which Augustus later gave popular currency: "*tota Italia*". Even in Roman Imperial Europe, the principle "*civis Romanus sum*" presupposed subordination of Transalpine Gauls, Dalmatians, or Spaniards to metropolitan elites ruling from gubernatorial outposts. The practice of contemptuous reference to non-Roman birth of aspirants to elite status died out much later. Mattingly writes:

"In the Roman Empire the opposite principles of unity and diversity are nicely balanced . . . Up to a point the unity was complete: there was one Emperor over all, one army, one Civil service in the end, one religion. But you could never speak of one nationality or one culture."

Their nationality presupposes a common fund of historical memories and traditions, specific folkways, generally a common language, but not necessarily the existence of a state form or movement to match it.

This would remain the situation in feudal times. For instance in Imperial China, from Han times to that of the Manchus, there were indeed certain communal memories of unified culture, territorial integrity, etc. Central elites ruled various cultural groups such as South Chinese, Manchurians or Yunnanese, (and occasionally but with fierce resistance, Vietnamese) who were never, at any given moment, bound together by the same communal memories or interests. The Taoist-Confucian split marked another contradiction in group ideologies. Even when imperial authority maintained territorial integrity over a long period, and could foster a basic community of generally elitist mandarin intelligentsia, this mere fact did not create Pan-Chinese nationality.<sup>8</sup> Chinese nationality began to develop only after the late 19th century Tung-Chih Restoration and the growth of national markets under the onslaught of colonialism. Trends creating it were intensified during the Kuomintang's futile attempt at nationalist bourgeois liberalism between 1911 and 1949. The present fact of all-Chinese nationalism is, in a very real sense, a new achievement of People's China.<sup>9</sup>

Community of memories and privileges in a given territory bounded by the spread of one or more elements within that sense of community, or by

clearly marked geographical boundaries, marks nationality. The mere fact of imperial authority, territorial integrity, or even linguistic sameness (which Stalin emphasised in his definition of both nationality and nationalism) are not sufficient to create a nationality, let alone a nation. Nationhood cannot be imposed; on the other hand, it may grow in essentially hostile contradiction to imperial imposition of political centralisation. In such a situation, nationalism may grow out of, or leads to a freedom struggle; sometimes undertaking a War of Liberation, at other times following the path of constitutional gradualism.

But even without the existence of any form of national movement, forms of social group consciousness, superior to clans, *gentes*, or caste may be discerned. These forms, intermediate between primitive social segmentation and nationalism or nationhood, are what we call nationality.

## II *A Marxist Controversy and a Conceptual Elucidation:*

The next question is—at what historical stage of development does nationality get transformed into nationalism? Recently some Marxist social scientists in India have devoted attention to this problem. A Special Number of *Social Scientist* which appeared in August, 1975, devoted to “The National Question in India” presents two articles demonstrating sharp juxtaposition of views still existing on this subject.

Professor Irfan Habib uses his valuable and correct historical conclusions about the narrow and limited character of mediaeval Indian “commodity-production” (which) “ought not to be confused with capitalistic production”,<sup>10</sup> to move to an absolutist polemic.

He believes that

“the nations originated as Stalin puts it, in the process of the elimination of feudalism and the development of capitalism. But in central and eastern Europe, nations emerged only with the Industrial Revolution... The bourgeoisie trying to create domestic markets behind national walls played the crucial role in creating nations. ‘The market,’ says Stalin quite aptly, ‘is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism’.”<sup>11</sup>

Habib then poses and answer his own question:

“Is India then a nation?”

“Marxists must without hesitation answer this question in the negative. India is a country, certainly; but it is not a nation because it meets the requirement of neither a common language nor a common culture. It is a country which contains a number of emerging nationalities with different languages and cultures of their own.”<sup>12</sup>

India's Industrial Revolution, he says, is not complete.

But he goes on to polemicize against:

"some Marxists (who) write as if the nationalities within India began to emerge even before the British conquests, so that today we ought not to speak of emerging nationalities, but of nationalities that are fully formed already."<sup>13</sup>

(Overlooking the possibility that nationalities might have been emerging among Bengalis, Marathis, Pakhtuns, or Keralans, in the period of regional cultural development from the eighth to the eighteenth centuries, and that Mughal imperialism might have arrested this trend, Habib says:

"To sum up: 'There was no basis for the emergence of nationalities before the British conquests, because there was no trace of any emerging bourgeoisie. And quite predictably we find no trace of national consciousness in whatever is preserved in the regional literatures of the period.'<sup>14</sup>

The reason he gives for his asseverations is that linguistic unity<sup>15</sup> did not exist in pre-British India:

"India during the period before the British conquest was where Western Europe was before the Industrial Revolution. . . . One should look for political consequences similar to those occurring in Western Europe, among them the rise of nationalities."<sup>16</sup>

Another point of view is stated in "certain concepts and a framework of analysis" posed by Dr. Partha Chatterjee. Like Habib, he believes that:

"the nation-state was built in Western Europe in the era of capitalism. In its historical archetype, it emerged out of feudalism in the course of a nationalism led by a rising bourgeoisie and culminating in the bourgeois revolution . . . seeking to assume control of state power as well as of the home market. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

Delving further back into the Marxism of *Das Kapital*, Chatterjee popularises a line of interpretation, originally worked out by Asok Sen in his 1972 article, mentioned at the beginning of this paper. This is the distinction between

"two distinct paths of capitalist development and industrial revolution in the archetypal bourgeois nation-states."

In the first way—of England, Holland, Switzerland—developed on the basis of small units of industrial production and of abolition of rent as the predominant mode of extraction of agricultural surplus—the bourgeoisie separated "the two realms of the state and civil society (*gesellschaft*)": used all civil social institutions (such as family, communications media, and education) to diffuse liberalism over the rest of society and to de-emphasise cultural distinctions within society. In the second way—such as in Germany or Japan—where positive state initiative in production had to be taken to carry the

economy forward on the path of industrial revolution, direct participation of the state in production means that the bourgeoisie was unable to separate state control from civil society.<sup>18</sup> Chatterjee hypothesises that second-way capitalist development led to the dependance of its bourgeoisie

“upon the older ideological structures of a cultural community (*gemcinschaft*) historically developed since precapitalist times.”<sup>19</sup> Calling these “a nationality”, Chatterjee diverges from Habib in emphasising that language is not the only cement of nationality.

Actually, language, literary and aesthetic tradition, material culture—e.g. good habits, clothing and festivals, folk religious rituals—together form components of the cultural identity of nationality. Sometimes a unified feudal state or an organized religious tradition may crystallise this nationality: the consolidation must in any case be strong enough to survive the collapse of such pre-capitalist structures, and to be ramified into nationalist ideologies.<sup>20</sup>

Chatterjee reminds us that this distinction between ‘nationality’ or ‘people’ and ‘nation’ was made by Friedrich Engels in three articles on Poland in March to May, 1866, first published in *The Commonwealth* and in *The Peasant War in Germany*, and is to be found in a manuscript on the “Decay of Feudalism and the Rise of National States” appended in a 1974 Moscow edition of *The Peasant War*.<sup>21</sup> He elucidates that:

“Stalin unfortunately attributes to the ‘nation’ all these characteristics which should properly apply only to the ‘nationality’. This lands him in all sorts of conceptual difficulties when discussing the national question in eastern Europe.”<sup>22</sup>

The limitation in Dr. Chatterjee’s analysis is the implication that nationality is nothing more than a precapitalist constraint on only one path of capitalist development, the less progressive and more state authoritarian ‘second way’. The specific historicity of nationality in the relatively more progressive ‘first way’ capitalism does also have an impact on the national character of the countries which go through the first path. While treating pure nationality as a pre-national phenomenon (in itself a very limited statement of a situation which could co-exist with nationalism), Chatterjee also does not consider the formational character of feudalism, itself, in the transformation from nationality to nationhood. Not only can nationality precede capitalism, so can nationhood.

### III *Feudalism, Nationhood and the Contradictions of the Absolutist Epoch :*

It is clear to Marxists that capitalism really sprouts in the transitional epoch, characterised by absolutist state forms which hold together nationality during the decline of feudalism and the bursting asunder, by the growing

bourgeoisie, of the feudal society, economy and legal system. But apart from the logic of expanding capitalism itself, the circumstances within which the bourgeoisie develop out of the womb of feudalism are explicated by the particular national pattern of the late feudal state.

By the end of the fifteenth century, when bourgeois (in the most orthodox sense of the word—i.e., urban commercial) forms existed only in the interstices of the Western European feudal system, an embryonic sense of nationality had come into being among the English or French peoples. The Normans were no longer a *herrenvolk*—at least in Normandy and England, if not in Ireland—after the reign of King Edward I. English nationality was forged together during the massive conjuncture of feudal crisis which spanned England and France—the Hundred Years' War. From the time of Edward III, merchants in the City of London, the capital of the state, who formed the germinal nucleus of the British bourgeoisie, took advantage of financial aspects of this crisis to increase the influence of the mediaeval city corporation. In other parts of North-Western Europe, the end of the high feudal era saw a formation of Estates, other than the nobility.<sup>23</sup>

In England, the Wars of the Roses which followed the uncertain end of the French Wars, were the result of factional squabbles for power and influence among the baronial class, who had enriched themselves by plunder. This had existed from the beginning of the feudal period<sup>24</sup> of the farm economy. In the fifteenth century the profits of plunder as well as of increased exploitation began to make its way into small gentry and mercantile capital. This led to recrudescence of factional internecine war. Fifteenth century monarchs found it necessary to control these bastard forms of feudalism.<sup>25</sup> Private retainer armies recruited by the top feudal aristocracy were increasingly curbed by royal Statutes of Livery and Maintenance; and then in the sixteenth century by stern, authoritarian crushing of increasingly weak feudal uprisings against the Crown—the last being the abortive Essex Rebellion against Elizabeth I in the capital city of London itself. In this tilting balance of power, the municipal burghers rose in social and economic influence.

This led to absolutism in the 16th and early 17th centuries. The Civil War marked the defeat but not the downfall of monarchical absolutism. The Stuart, Orange, and Hanoverian monarchy continually regrouped its relations with the nobility, and later with the bourgeoisie. It was not till 1784 and Pitt's India Act that absolutism yielded the initiative to Parliamentary quasi-democratic control. The bourgeoisie was never wholly triumphant. Very slowly it came by a series of compromises to terms of victory over the social remnants of feudalism. Already in the time of Tudor absolutism, British nationalist ideology was beginning to be written down—not least from the theatre-going point of view of the First Elizabethan epoch, in which

nobility and bourgeoisie both had their place. Shakespeare's history plays—which pointed out the defects of the despotic personality (*vide Julius Caesar* and *Richard II*) and built up a heroic image of monarchy slowly taming a strife-torn nobility (the most notable statement of the national myth is *Henry V* and the Tudor apotheosis is stated in *King Henry VIII*)—as well as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and studies of their reception by later generations, would repay re-reading in this context. Bourgeois identity with, and pride in, the English heritage, was a definite fact during Tudor as well as Stuart absolutism. Yet it was ridden by an often forgotten contradiction about the existence of Scottish nationality till the eighteenth century, as well as about the separate and class-conscious identities of the Gaelic peasantry and Catholic lords, *vis-a-vis* the alien element of Protestant Ulster and the Dublin Pale in Ireland. English nationalism—not nationality alone—is concomitant with and not a dependant consequence of the primary accumulation of capitalism in Britain. Both Habib and Chatterjee overdetermine their case by making capitalism a necessary condition for inferring the existence of nationalities and also of nationalism. So also, from the non-Marxist angle, does Prof. Ray.

Along with the growth of the absolutist state due to the corruption and weakening of feudalist tendencies, there grew a scientific and rational temper, whose diffusion has been the subject of recent research.<sup>26</sup> Not only progressive sections of nobility and gentle folk, but also artisans and peasantry, tied by trade relations with the former, were affected by this. However, as late as 1681, an English Bishop resented the filtration downwards of education to artisans on the ground that dissemination of previously sacred knowledge had led them to

“philosophize themselves into principles of impiety”<sup>27</sup> i.e., into what would become democratic radicalism in the 19th century. Christopher Hill has now noted that in his seminal *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* he should have more sharply differentiated between the ‘mechanical philosophy’ proper, and ‘mechanic atheism’. The philosophy coagulated from a variety of streams, which had flourished in the feudal mind—alchemy, astrology and magic—which were slowly rationalised into cosmological versions of proto-science by Bacon, Comenius (a Czech intellectual influential in early Stuart England), Samuel Hartlib and others. This cosmology led to later scientific theory in the late 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>28</sup>

But the learning of ‘rude mechanicals’<sup>29</sup> themselves did diffuse communication media among common English people. Thus it prepared the ground for democratising the people. A common English language, recognisable today, had come into existence by Tudor times—the language of the *pays*, as distinct from *langues d’oc* and *langues d’oïl*, in French parlance. Common



people could comprehend the common interests of the nation-state, as these were formulated by the ruling-class—all in a period when merchant capitalism was germinating and industrial capitalism was still in the womb of the future.

Nationalism acts as a copula between feudalism in decline and the rise of the state in the age of capitalism. Where nationalities embrace capitalism, there the nation has sufficient force to drive forward into either first or second way capitalism. Without capitalism the people's collective will power remains localised to the needs of field and farm—one may say, in the form of "stranded nationalities"—such as the Cossacks before subsumption into the Tsarist system, Italian nationality before the Risorgiments—or to come historically closer to home, the Marathas before they entered the Indian national movement in the second half of the 19th century, or the Khasi, Naga, Mizo and Sikkimese people before they accepted the general socio-economic implications of being part of the Indian Union.

In the later absolutist epoch, strife began among different classes within the nation on the basis of property rights and hierarchical order systems (*Ständestaat*). In England, alignments and ideologies came to a revolutionary head in the mid-seventeenth century, when its bourgeoisie began, from the time of the Civil War, to gain class power over a previously absolutist Crown allied with a now subordinate nobility. The first rumblings of lower-class radicalism against already emergent bourgeois morality began to be heard in the tracts and teachings of True Levellers (Diggers), Ranters and early Quakers. Revolutionary or even capitalist origins in France were delayed by another century or more. In the seventeenth century, France went through factional noble and Paris merchant dissension: i.e., the Fronde, which had no revolutionary potential. The heightening of feelings of state community, which is our definition of nationalism, came out of this series of class contradictions and their partial and limited resolution during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This was the period when the Western European bourgeoisie was extending its hegemony over civil institutions (*gesellschaft*) and was heightening nationality consciousness (*gemeinschaft*) to a point of identification with bourgeois culture.<sup>30</sup> This identification was an integral element in producing success for industrial Capitalism in Western Europe.

Rather than looking back to Stalin's identification of Industrial Revolution with nationalism,<sup>31</sup> we may return even more fundamentally to Karl Marx's articles written in 1854 in *The New York Daily Tribune* relating to the historical lack of national cohesion in Spain. He said that in Spanish, or in Asiatic formations of society, the state was, so to speak, suspended over the social framework—national tendencies were not super-structurally

evident and were limited by weak and loose forms of social cohesion.<sup>32</sup> This limitation of all societies which had not undergone Western European processes of transformation was seen by Marx in the context of the endogamous national capacity of European absolutism to ally itself with and facilitate bourgeois hegemony.

His comment on European absolutism is worth notice here:

"It was in the sixteenth century that were formed the great monarchies which established themselves everywhere on the downfall of the conflicting feudal classes—the aristocracy and the towns . . . in the states of Europe absolute monarchy presents itself as a civilising centre, as the initiator of social unity . . . it was the laboratory, worked as to allow the towns to change the local independence and sovereignty of the Middle Ages for the general rule of the middle classes and the common survey of civil society."<sup>33</sup>

Absolutism from the Transylvanian Alps to the British Channel is contrasted with developments in the same period in late mediaeval Spain, where pre-absolutist aristocracy and the 'historical liberties' of municipal oligarchy were allowed to proliferate and grow rank. In this passage unjustly neglected by Marxists, which elucidates the content of his empirical thinking about the character of non-developing state-society relationships, Marx shows that the stultification of economic prosperity in feudal Spain meant that the hangover of feudal authoritarianism could 'overdetermine' stagnatory trends in the Spanish economy, at the same time when bourgeois hegemony was maturing in Western Europe.<sup>34</sup>

Feudal breakdown might in many cases, have led to a systematic organization of absolutism. But, national variances meant that certain types of absolutism would not necessarily become as efficient as others. The velocity of development in Parliamentary Britain, or even in the more slow and jerkily paced, late Bourbon and Revolutionary/Napoleonic France was not replicated elsewhere. Spain saw the stagnation of breakdown. In Italy or Austria-Hungary also, Habsburg authoritarianism, however "enlightened despotic" it became in the 1780s, was similarly limited by the existence of unprogressive historical liberties of feudal nobility and constituted bodies, which made enlightened despotism necessarily a failure. In this context, R. R. Palmer's comments on "the limitations of enlightened despotism" *a propos* the Habsburg Emperor, Joseph II, are apposite:

"recent Hungarian Marxist studies, blame the Habsburgs for 'arresting our bourgeois national revolution', find their so-called 'enlightened absolutism' designed to preserve feudalism, and assert as a dogmatic principle that 'absolute monarchy is the highest stage of feudal society'. See *Etudes des delegues Hongrois au Xe Congres*

*International des Sciences Historiques a Rome* (Budapest, 1955), 18, 19, 73. For these writers the Hapsburgs were colonialist exploiters and it was the broad masses not the aristocracy, that represented the desire for national independence. There is more evidence for Mitrofanov's repeated statement that the peasants in all parts of the Empire remained *Kaisertreu*. Maria Theresa, Joseph and Leopold represented the 'highest stage of feudalism' in that precisely feudalism was what they did not want—but could not wholly get rid of."<sup>38</sup>

There may be fairly long eras in history—as has occurred in Southern and Central Europe till the 20th century—when feudal decline becomes stranded in the shoals and weeds of its own stagnation.

By analogy, in such a vast and multi-regional realm as India, the rise of Mughal absolutism on the political ruins of early feudal or proto-feudal regional formations meant no necessary qualitative leap from feudalism towards capitalism. Irfan Habib's very valuable empirical data on the limitations in the absolutist character of the Mughal Empire and the lack of potentialities for capitalist development in pre-colonial India give pointers to such a conclusion.<sup>39</sup>

#### IV *Marxist Historical Analysis of Transition from pre-Capitalism :*

Karl Marx indeed posited essentially more than one way of historical development from archaic formations of production relations towards modernity. This is the contention of not only Eric Hobsbawm (with whom Professor Habib joined issue<sup>37</sup>), but also of such veteran Indian Marxists as E. M. S. Namboodiripad, the late D. D. Kosambi, and Professor Susobhan Sarkar.<sup>38</sup> In the Western European paradigm, the constant Promethean capacity of social forces to break the integument of state regulation, was created by the dynamism of class struggle<sup>39</sup> which gave progressive content to the growth from nationalities to nationalism. But this dynamo is lacking in lands such as Spain or Italy or Tsarist Russia or Turkey or India. Here overdetermination of stagnation left late mediaeval state forms high and dry, shoaled as arbiters of social dissension.<sup>40</sup>

Marx's loose label "Asiatic", or his linking of this label with Islamic culture and with what he considered to be the Islamic contribution to state-formation is unfortunate.<sup>41</sup> It is, however, worthwhile to consider later Marxian thought on Asiatic formations as a contribution to the study of special cases of slow social transformation, in which retardation was overdetermined and economic backwardness was historically created by the imposition of colonialism.

In such circumstances, the pre-capitalist paths outside the European

world were not so much a record of intensification/transformation of class contradictions, as of the stagnating existence of class dissensions or discordance. Much of the stagnation was the product of endemic traditions of such types of social segmentation as tribe, caste, or occupational clan. It is of course true that the lower castes in India and those tribes which had moved from the hunting and gathering or slash-and-burn forms of communal relations to a peripheral place in settled agriculture were traditionally the ones which had to perform manual agricultural labour<sup>43</sup> and were kept as rural proletariat in agrarian class structure (e.g. Chamars, Kurmis, Bagdis, Bauris, Nadars, Mahars, Parayas, etc.). But it is also the fact that such a situation was merely the base for rearing an elaborate superstructural ideology of the hierarchy of ritual purity, kinship regulation, occupational rigidities, discriminatory inequalities relating to housing in the village outskirts, job opportunities, the lowered status of artisans—vis-a-vis—traders, and traders—vis-a-vis clerics and warriors, all of which adds up to the false consciousness of the caste system that Prof. M. N. Srinivas has made so fashionable by drawing the veil of Sanskritization over it.<sup>43</sup> In the case of Indian lower castes, this false consciousness meant the belief that without the artificial harmony of Sanskritization, upward mobility in social stratification was impossible. They never developed the consciousness that this was an artificial and restrictive harmony of social hierarchy.

Thus the false consciousness of mobility within the caste system braked the maturation of latent possibilities of class struggle in Indian society and clogged the possibilities of its dynamic transformation. Hence conflicts took the form of religious and ideological factional dissension within Hindu or Muslim society between polytheism and ritualism represented by hierarchy-ridden priesthood-cum-landlord groups (such as the social base of the Vallabhachari movement in Punjab and Gujarat) and monotheism and/or Bhakti movements of socially lower groups at a given time (such as Sikhism in the Punjab, or the Brahmo Samaj, or the Radhasoami Satsang in Gujarat).<sup>44</sup> This is perhaps the point of Professor Niharranjan Ray's very recent statement in the 36th Session of The Indian History Congress at Aligarh that whatever social protest movements took place in traditional Indian society were limited within the society which they challenged.<sup>45</sup>

In pre-capitalist, non-Western European societies, different local organisational forms of the relations of production maintained a relative difference from Western European patterns of historical transformation, a difference which decayed only very slowly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>46</sup> There was no inherent autonomy from supposedly peculiarly "Western" forms of class struggle, or supposed social "unchangeability", only a slower rate of gestation towards the maturation of class struggle.

Such forms could be regulated by only the loosest types of state formation.<sup>46</sup> It was this looseness which negated the emergence of such organs of social authority or coherence, as the parliamentary control of those types of localised institutions which had been common under feudalism. The non-emergence in particular sub-continental areas of any one particular mode of production, or the existence in them of a variegated mosaic of different forms of localised production, meant in political sociological terms, the necessity of controlling their different nationalities by centralised imperial orders in which there yet remained a certain disjunction of the town-country nexus, and an undue predominance of the court over the market place and the countryside. In such late mediaeval imperial orders as prevailed under the Mughal system and its eighteenth and early nineteenth century successors, or Safavid Persia and its eighteenth and nineteenth century successors, or in Ottoman Turkey, or in the Manchu Empire, a certain arbitrary and personalised flexibility was necessary. The scale and logistics of administrative problems were too big to allow the regularity of bureaucratic practice, which was Max Weber's idealtype for the evolution of capitalist democracy but whose reality was far from what he hoped was coming into being in his own nineteenth-century Germany.

These are the broader reasons or historical divergence between the Western European model of change from feudalism to early modern monarchical absolutism and the more loosely-structured patterns of rural-based social integration held together by imperial authoritarianism. The renegade Marxist turned philosopher-sociologist, Karl Wittfogel went completely off the mark regarding the mechanics of the latter type of societies, when he stated that Marx had wished to construct an actual historical category entitled 'Asiatic despotism'. On the contrary<sup>47</sup> Marx, in his letters and journalistic writings, used the term 'despotism' as a historical variant of absolutism, showing greater arbitrariness consequent on the span of area to be governed in the pre-capitalist state. His constant referent in all his writings including ephemera was the non-emergence of the origins of capitalism outside Europe, in the era when it germinated, during the absolutist epoch, in Western Europe.

### *V Western European Nationalism and Imperialism :*

Unlike capitalism, nationalism in Western Europe was not unique in a world-historical sense. It was a product of certain particular features in the age of transition from feudalism to early modern absolutism. One of these features was its nourishment on pride in overseas expansion and in the subjection of alien peoples and lands. Such cannibalism was unnecessary in the

later type of nationalism, which grew in the colonised areas. One may look at some examples of the diversification in the character of the relationship of nationalism with imperialism.

*Portugal*, a country which has only recently begun to escape from long-persistent hangover of feudalised colonialism, was one of the earliest Western European nation-states. It was one of the first to seek alternative territorial outlets for its fisherfolk, merchants and chivalric nobility by overseas exploration of new trade prospects. Its monarchy systematically embarked on "the enterprise of empire". The *locus classicus* of the Portuguese imperial self-image, of marriage to the Ocean, will be found in Camoens' *Lusiads*,<sup>50</sup> of which Prof. Boxer has noted:

"It was during the sixty years 'Spanish captivity' that the *Lusiadas* of Luis de Camoes attained the status of a national epic."

Nationalism became so chauvinist under the Braganca rulers who liberated Portugal from Spanish control in the seventeenth century, that Dr. Antonio Sousa de Macedo, who later formulated early Braganca nationalism, wrote (in 1631 during Spanish rule), the *Flores de Espana, Excelencias de Portugal*, maintaining that instead of calling Camecus "a second Homer or a second Virgil" it would be more accurate to term the Greek or Roman poets as the first Camecus' Sousa de Macedo claimed "that Portuguese orthodoxy left nothing to be desired, since they were always great persecutors of unbelievers, beginning with Luso or Lusio, a captain of Trajan who distinguished himself by the number of Jews which (sic) he had personally killed in the capture of Jerusalem".<sup>51</sup>

Portuguese nationalism and imperialism in Goa and its dependencies, in Southern Africa, and in Brazil, till recently remained a carry-over of some of the worst aspects of late feudalism—in its blatant chivalry at the expense of weaker people, its racial chauvinism at the expense of black Africans, Kanarese or Konkane (at least from the time of Vasco da Gama till Albuquerque) and its emphasis on militant Christianity (which may have been a hang up from Portuguese lack of participation in the earlier feudal crusades). Colonial exploitation was, in some respects, for Portugal, a surrogate for its weak capitalism. The latter remained rickety, perhaps because of the excessive dependence of this agrarian-cum-pastoral economy on the mercantile profits of its colonialism.<sup>52</sup> The plunder of Goa, the Indies, Mozambique, Angola and Brazil made Portugal's national existence possible, despite semi-feudal backwardness at home. Portuguese capital had to become itself dependant from the early 18th century—since the Methuen Treaty—on British colonialist capitalism. Portugal's integrity against the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in the early 19th century was the work of Wellington's armies.<sup>53</sup> Here nationalism, linked with mercantile outpost

colonialism, gained little sustenance from capitalism of the early bourgeois type. Hence its character remained semi-feudally chauvinistic.

The recent theoretical linkage of colonialism with capitalist nationalism alone, has come from concentration of Britain and Holland as specific archetypes. *The Netherlands*, too, however, became part of Britain's international market and diplomatic network by the end of the 18th century.<sup>54</sup> The British case illustrates the lack of exact concordance between nationalism and colonialism between a country such as Portugal, and on the other hand, a burgeoning national capitalism, such as that of Britain.

In 18th century *Britain*, the capitalist agrarian gentry and mercantile bourgeoisie increasingly coming to power from the House of Commons—Walpoles, Townshends, Pitts and Beckfords—compromised with decayed feudalism, to share administrative power and the profits of empire. The decay of feudalism was represented on the one hand, by the House of Lords and the older gentry—Carterets, Pelhams, Rockinghams—and on the other, by Scots gentry and merchants (who in a sub-national group allied themselves with eighteenth century English bourgeois encroachment against the Jacobite Highlanders) and also collaborated with indigenous landgrabbing nobility.<sup>55</sup>

The British national compromise included the 1707 Union with Scotland, the beginnings of clear predominance of the more bourgeois Commons over the Crown and Lords, the origins of Cabinet government and the Manchester and other lobbies newly thrown up by the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, which sought in the name of free private trade to destroy the charter rights over overseas trade of powerful monopolies such as The East India Company.<sup>56</sup> Administrative staffing was done by landlords and gentry intelligentsia who held political office and stocked the Diplomatic Service; while the middle classes controlled business and finance. Systems of entail and primogeniture, which controlled laws of inheritance, pushed younger sons of armigerous gentry into the ranks of the middle class. The overbearing social *cachet* of landed status pulled those members of the middle class, who had acquired affluence, into the ranks of landed gentry. The conditions of entry, here, were either by purchase, or by marriage,<sup>57</sup> or by education of children at the relatively expensive preparatory private boarding or Public Schools, where the social *mores* of the new national ruling class of Britain was moulded. The push represented a feudal remnant—the pull, social expenditure, within ruling class agrarian and educational institutions, of surpluses which were being accrued from the increasing scale of business or finance, or commercial developments in agriculture. This neutralisation of forces represented the social aspect of the compromise by means of which capitalism, increasingly spilling over into colonialism,<sup>58</sup> came to exercise social hegemony over British nationality.<sup>59</sup>



On the other hand, in *Tsarist Russia*, imperialism at the expense of the Siberian and Central Asian peoples definitely predates very late capitalist growth in parts of Russia, just before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Suppression of the Ukrainian and Cossack peasant uprisings, peasant colonisation and ruining exploitation of the trans-Ural region, mid-nineteenth century expansion into the Central Asian emirates, sponsored after the time of Gortchakov, were all attempts to favourably balance the man-land ratio within Russia. Such attempts and consequent results may also be found in *U.S.A* and *Canada* in the 19th century. But whereas the frontier expansion of the Western European settlers in the U.S.A. kept pace with capitalist developments initially financed by Dutch and English investment in the east coast seaboard, the Tsarist frontier had very little formational relationship (i.e., in terms of mode of production) with a later and exotic capitalism. This rickety capitalism was as much induced by doses of investment of surplus capital from France and other West European countries which built little base for a genuine bourgeoisie, as much as it grew out of the impoverishment and failure in land management of the *dvorianstvo* (nobility), as out of second way capitalist attempts by state officials like Witte and Stolypin to inculcate capitalism in agriculture and also to a limited extent in industry.<sup>60</sup> The nationalism of Tsarist Russia, which was expressed as much by Pushkin, Herzen, or Dostoevsky, as by the Slavophiles or Pobedonostsev (and whose base was peasant acceptance of Great Russian identity) was not a product of late Tsarist capitalism. In one sense, it reflected the same forces from which came Tsarist imperialism. Britain surely is an archetype of the concomitance of nationalism and burgeoning capitalism. However, other national cases indicate circumstances where the surviving force of feudal traits, or pre-capitalist forms and modes could breed, even in the nineteenth century (the high age of capitalism), types of nationalism which flourished on overseas or overland expansion of imperialism, and which were linked with, at best, a rickety capitalism. In only some states was nationalism the result of capitalist growth. In all, imperialism and nationalism were supportive forces—as outlet and ideology for penned up manpower and dumping of second-hand technology, as dynamism for social endeavour and as resources and bulwarks for security.

This comes out clearly in early romantic poetry and the historical novel. If colonialist capitalism as well as chauvinist nationalism can be found in Thomas Campbell's doggerel:

"Britannia needs no bulwarks, no towers along the steep,

Her march is o'er the ocean wave, her home is on the deep."<sup>61</sup>

similar sentiments will be available in the Portugal of Henry the Navigator, Camoens and the Braganzas; in 19th century Colbertian France, which was



also the nation of Bossuet and Racine: and in Empress Catherine's Tsarist Russia. The frontier spirit of Catherine's gentry *vis-a-vis* Cossack peasant uprisings such as those of Emelyan Pugachov, is apotheosised in as much modern nationalist spirit by Pushkin in his 19th century novelette, *The Captain's Daughter* as Walter Scott similarly states tensions between Lowland Scots incipient capitalism and Highlander tribal feudalism, epitomically put in *Rob Roy*.<sup>22</sup>

It is a travesty of the method of Marx not to analyse Western European nationalism as superstructural ideology and to only treat it as an invariant pattern repeated everywhere and at all times in the modern world. Naturally, one does not have to postulate necessary autonomy of hegemonist ideology from the economic and social base. But one has to be precise about the specificity of the dependence of an ideology on a particular type of base. For instance, we have seen that Portuguese or Tsarist patterns of nationalism were exceptional to the archetype of the British one; perhaps because of their pre-capitalist or rickety capitalist base. (By the same token, British nationalism in the late 1970s has become discordant and fragile, perhaps because British capitalist bereft of colonialist sustenance, has developed rickets.)

At opposite ends of the nationalist epoch, the frontier positions of Portugal and Tsardom on the sea and steppe gave them abundant leeway or land to vegetate into decadent feudal imperialism: it was this which gave Tsarist Russia, what Lenin in several writings from the 1890s to the 1920s, called its 'semi-Asiatic' character.

For all that, there is a pattern to be discerned in all these cases, not of the dependence of nationalism on capitalism, but rather of the tendency for European nationalism to supportively embark on imperialist ventures which fed its aggressiveness at the expense of non-European cultures and which led European nationalism and capitalism to impose its model on those cultures.

## VI *Imperialism, Colonialism and its Antithesis— Anti-Colonial Nationalism:*

Imperialism is a power-drive which can be found in any historical era after the emergence of state-forms. It is integrally linked with aggressive nationalism as developed in European states. But there is a chronological distinction between sheer expansionism or ultra-chauvinism on the one hand, and the economic offspin and feedback of capitalism, on the other. The latter type of imperialism, which in terms of mode of production, is part of the expansion of European capitalism in the wider world, is called colonialism.

In terms of simplest approximations, how does colonialism come into being and how does it expand? At base, the issue is one of relative fit between internal resources and the consumption needs and preferences of nations

which have attained a certain level of social cohesion and economic development, and yet lack the factor endowments for self-sufficiency. Such nations were to be found in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, on the coasts of Western Europe. Here, mediaeval fishing links with the Atlantic led to the search for trade routes to the Indies. There early enterprises were linked with a sense of religious purpose in the case of nations where Catholicism was strong and with a secular drive for cornering the re-export trade of metropolitan entrepôts, in the case of Protestant nations. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there began to come back from the tropics to western upper and middle class consumers monopolised surpluses of scarce luxury commodities, such as spices, textiles and slaves. Fugitives from unfavourable political conditions also built or found refuge in colonies and plantations particularly in North America and the West Indies—where they mingled with aristocratic remnants of an earlier wave of migrants. Both “factories” with extra-territorial privileges, and settler colonies became dependant market bases in networks of outposts for protected navigation (in the metropolitan interest) between resource export points, entrepôts, and final profit-making outlets. A well-known model of British trade in the eighteenth century was the triangular system between Bristol, West African slaving and West Indian sugar. A similar early nineteenth century model developed between East India Company opium sold to Canton and China tea sold to London, where the final tea grading and profit was made. These networks could also be polyhedral in their structure.

By the time of Napoleon and his Continental Blockade of British trade, mercantile colonialism outside the USA had realised the obsolescence of plantation economy and was turning to exploitation of Asian, African and American hinterland trade. French imperialism failed to use Europe as a lever to shift the valuable re-export bases away from Britain’s balance of trade. Scandinavia and Russia, Portugal, Southern Spain, Italy and the Turkish domains were too interlinked with the British structure of international trade to tolerate the obsolete mercantilist political economy of the French Imperial Decrees.

But the post-Waterloo industrial booms in Britain opened up far greater prospects for colonialist expansion on a world scale. There was a tremendous increase in the rate of growth of production of commodities such as textiles or ironware. The new power-driven looms and machinery made possible an enormous accumulation of capital. The protagonists of “private trade” competing with the East India Company’s monopoly merged with broader interest groups, such as the predecessors of the Manchester School, who lobbied for greater tariff protection, capital investment and infrastructure creation, not only for stepped-up commodity exports to the Empire, and

consequent labour policies of indenturing, procurement of backward communities for transfer to plantations, and legal bonding to the workplace (the economic substitute for actual slavery),<sup>63</sup> but also for intensified extraction—for feeding into the metropolitan capitalism—raw materials such as cotton, indigo, or jute, whose regular import under protective tariffs into Britain would cheapen the cost of production or packaging British machine-made commodities. All this created greater demands for imperial protection in the British capitalist interest, for greater British capital investment and for infrastructure creation in the dependencies, such as India.<sup>64</sup> The new British Empire became a market for the maintenance of British capitalist nationalism, while the arena of diffusion of profit within the metropolis increased. A far-flung international trade network, protected by British and Indian armies, and by the British Navy, in British national interests, extending from Hong Kong and Tasmania to the Falkland Islands and the Pacific Ocean was the colonial component in British nationalism in the era of capitalism.

Awareness of, and competition with this system greatly facilitated the development of capitalist production, technology, and business practice in the colonialist world. It was the germ of similar developments in France, the U.S.A., and Germany; and later, in different forms in Italy and in Japan. Latecomer industrial capitalism in these countries had less uncultivated land or undeveloped markets to exploit than had been available to the first capitalist nations. They also faced greater awareness of, and resistance to their incursion on the territories of weaker nationalities in Asia and Africa. The Persian or Chinese or Moroccan or Turkish armed struggles or state-reorganization programmes are notable in this context. Hence latecomer capitalism perforce became more militaristic and authoritarian. They found it necessary to maintain colonisation of their own dependencies with a greater degree of absolutism than had been practised in the earlier colonies. The distinction between first and second way capitalism can be used to explain the processes of development in world colonialism.

The first, or British path to capitalism found it possible to permit limited sponsorship of civil-social institutions in the British Empire. The second, or the Prussian type of development meant authoritarian interference in dependant society and economy, which led to wholesale stultification in territories such as in the Arab world, for long under the dead hand and artificial modernisation (Tanzimat) of Ottoman Turk rule, or in present day Namibia which was once German South-West Africa and then a South African Protectorate, or during Japanese occupation in Manchuria (Manchukuo) and Taiwan (Formosa). The second way of colonial capitalism also began to be practised by metropolitan ruling classes whose home base has been developed according to the first way. Phases of hard British authoritarianism in India

(such as during the 1820s or 1859–1862 or early 1930s) or Dutch policies *vis-a-vis* indigenous economy and society in the Netherlands East Indies were cases in point.<sup>65</sup> Latecomers on any path of progress finding ahead of them in what appears to be a race, models of development which have matured under more easy conditions of entry, will be more successful if they take a more aggressive spurt, in order to catch up and pass competitors in the distribution of world resources and terms of trade. The other side of the medal was what this meant to the subject peoples. Older types of imperialism had meant just plunder of cash or commodities in demand in the imperialist state—cattle, precious stones or bullion<sup>66</sup>—as well as the creation of a subordinate ruling nobility who could be counted upon to maintain the remittance of tribute. The new capitalist incentives of colonialism—its need to establish market networks, nodes of communication and transportation of raw materials from hinterlands to *entrepôts* for outward transmission to the metropolis, and of finished industrial products from the metropolis *via* the *entrepôts* into the hinterland hierarchy of nodes: and the maintenance of a social chain of compradores, sales agents and subordinate officials for working and administering these systems—all these add up to increase of middle classes in the colonial areas. These were the products of capitalism on an international scale, but they are classes which failed to reap the full harvest of bourgeois hegemony. Their interests were not the same as those which made the ultimate profits, i.e. the bourgeois nationalism of the colonialist, metropolitan nation-state. In Gramscian terminology, such a middle class without *egemonia* represents a subaltern intelligentsia.<sup>67</sup>

The middle class intelligentsia remained resentful of *herrenvolk* elitism, and were impelled towards egalitarian agitations *vis-a-vis* the latter. These agitations turned into national movements or freedom struggles, or socialist liberation movements against the colonial order of international capitalist inequality. While imperialism could only create subordinate elites, colonialism dialectically spawned a subaltern middle class intelligentsia, whose ideology was forced by rude shocks to its innocence into anti-colonial nationalism.<sup>68</sup>

This trend is not distinctive for India. At this level of abstraction it is not country-specific. Latin American nationalism in the days of Bolivar, O'Higgins and Marti was the antithesis of Spanish imperialism and proto-colonialism.<sup>69</sup> Arab nationalism was originally the antithesis of Turkish imperialism, and then of British, French and Israeli colonialism in Egypt, Hedjaz, Mandated Syria, Mesopotamia, Transjordan and Palestine/Israel (successor states of the Ottoman Empire, which all became dependant on the European-*cum*-U.S. colonial and neo-colonial aegis).<sup>70</sup> The early nationalism of African political parties and movements were the antithesis of different

patterns of colonialism in Africa practised by European great powers; during the post-Sedan period of the Scramble for Africa.<sup>71</sup> Nationalism in Indonesia was the antithesis of the Netherlands colonial plantation system.<sup>72</sup> The specifics of each dialectical relationship differed from one movement to another and from one region of unevenness in underdevelopment to another. Yet at base, all these cases of nationalism were the antithesis of the nationalist imperialism of either the first or the second capitalist ways, which extended aggression over the countries, where capitalism had previously been non-existent or at best embryonic. Thus the growth of nationalism in the latter cannot be measured or comprehended by the political theory of European nationalism.

### VII *Notes toward A Critique of Neo-Colonialist Critics of Anti-Colonial Ideology :*

In the space of political and constitutional theory and political history which has been written about the post Second World War transfer of power to freedom movements in the colonialisèd world, about its consequences and implications, a recurrent note carps on the difference between nationalism of the Western European supposed archetype, and nationalism as expressed by anti-imperialism, which is criticised as emulating and yet diverging from the archetype. The fancifully constructed paternalism-prodigal-son-dialectic emphasises not the economic base of the nationalism of imperialist countries, but its gentlemanly democratic ideology (which is only one of its elements). European liberalism is used as a yardstick for measuring the performance of the freedom movements.

Neo-colonialist implications in U.S. political sociology and in the sociology of modernisation, have recently been elucidated.<sup>73</sup> We can briefly sample some of the patronising assumptions of Western social science about the character of anti-colonialist democratic ideology, and in particular, about the character of its social base in India.

Writing from a very liberal intellectual plane of abstraction, the eminent Oxford historian of political thought, John Plamenatz constructed in 1960 some presuppositions about *Alien Rule and Self-Government*. In the language of orthodox Western political theory he epitomised the view that Western European, avowedly alien, rule had created favourable conditions for nationalist movements in only those countries which had been westernised under alien rule.<sup>74</sup> His spirit was one of consistent anti-communism, with tired irritation about the limitations of democrats who had forced out previous imperialist masters (an irritation common to neo-colonialism in retreat after the Suez fiasco of 1956, and the rise of Nehru, Tito, Nasser, Mao Tse-tung and Chou Ean-Lai as international statesmen). Plamenatz could

praise only the ideological detritus, which was the imperialist legacy.<sup>73</sup> Democracy, he almost said, was as much a Western export as Manchester twist or Paisley shawls.

Plamenatz granted that

"About the Nazi or Fascists, there is often something of the buffoon or guttersnipe, of the man who thumbs his nose at culture or decency, as there hardly ever is about the Communist or nationalist from a backward country."<sup>74</sup>

But "Nationalists" who unlike the Fascists, stood by Westernised democracy, were the most to be applauded by Western liberals. This, he considered was the most worthwhile applause. He failed to note, as in fact, all political theorists have often done, that "backwardness" in the countries to which he referred was generally the product of not very cultured or decent economic pillage, of social perversion and political absolutism by Western colonialism, which exported democracy along with colonial capitalism. It is doubtful either if the Westernisation or the modernisation of the Third World, in which liberal political theorists of the immediately post-Second War imperial crisis believed, was ever a fact.<sup>75</sup> To judge the nationalism of countries immiserised by colonialisation, such as India, Indonesia, Ghana, Vietnam or Chile, in terms of either deviance or emulation of an imaginary model Western European archetype is a travesty of democratic premises based on popular sovereignty.

At the end of the same decade, in the first year of which Plamenatz published his polemic, we have *Capitalism and Underdevelopment: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*, by Andre Gunder Frank, an internationalist and revolutionary economist, educated in the U.S.A. Frank considers metropolitan capitalism to be the greatest blight on modern national development, one which has effectively stunted nationalist trends in underdeveloped countries, particularly in Latin America, the subject of his crude yet one-sided studies. Gunder Frank's economic determinism is the opposite pole of Plamenatz. He believes that the booms and slumps of the colonialised economies—in short their entire economic development process—has been and remains dependant on the course of capitalist development in the old colonial, and presently neo-colonial economies. This is his explanation why nationalist leadership in countries such as Chile and Brazil have sometimes taken advantage of slump periods of world capitalism to pursue anti-colonialist policies as well as why they are ultimately defeated by metropolitan neo-colonialism, when it regroups and is backed by the trade cycle. This ultra-left thesis ultimately comes close to Plamenatz's implications if they are wedded to an economic interpretation that anti-colonialist bourgeois nationalism remains parasitical and tailist with regard to the older type of capitalist

nationalism, neither fully integrated within it in subjection, nor accepting full-scale capitalist development, because of unevenness created by capitalism itself.

Frank accepts the Soviet social science terminology of national bourgeoisie as a category for labelling the liberal leadership of underdeveloped popular interests, but rejects the Soviet political belief that in its own interests, such a bourgeoisie will have to embark on a path of contradiction to the neo-colonialism which stultifies nationalist technological and capital formative prospects in the second Industrial Revolution taking place in the Third World. He does not believe that this path will entail gradual revolutionary training for the diverse localised elements of the toiling poor. Because he rejected the free enterprise liberalism of his Chicago teachers of economics, he also finds it now necessary to put the adjective 'national' into inverted commas, when he uses it to describe the bourgeoisie.<sup>18</sup> His interpretation runs counter to the fact that movements against neo-colonialism, such as that of the Chilean Allende Government, which had, above all, the working-class support on which Frank placed all his predictive faith, have played a part in mobilising national hopes in Asia, Africa and Latin America for combatting world capitalism. This was why the Allende Government had to be toppled by the U.S. government Central Intelligence Agency and Chilean local armed forces and subaltern, middle class, intermediaries. While Frank powerfully polemicised against those elements of bourgeoisie in previously-colonialised areas who parasitically depend on world capitalism, his overdeterministic logic ignores potentialities for struggle to create alternatives which can bypass the capitalist stranglehold on new nations. The CIA type espionage systems can be combatted: there should be no need for pessimistic overprediction on that score.

In the evaluation of Indian nationalism in the era of freedom struggle against British rule, a fashionable school of historians at Trinity College, Cambridge in Britain have overemphasised its limitations, rather than its progressive aspects. Anil Seal's *Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* lacked the mature, though blasé, bourgeois logic of a Plamenatz, but made—with more stridence and panache—essentially the same point. This was that nationalism in colonial areas could not transcend the philoprogenitive possibilities of Western education and political associations or unions, which British imperialism (which, like Plamenatz, Seal finds it difficult to face up to calling colonialism) inculcated in the Indian bourgeoisie. Seal overemphasized the rivalries and internecine conflicts which flowed from local responses by the Congress and the Muslim League and their predecessors to the political patronage of the British Raj. Seal did not wish to admit that anti-colonial



nationalism in India opened new possibilities of alternative initiative to the lower middle classes and the peasantry, even in the late nineteenth century, the age of the Pabna and Deccan Riots, and of Maratha nationalism. Following the fashionable U.S. sociology of the 1960s, Seal wrote:

"If imperialism and nationalism have striven so tepidly against each other, part of the reason is that the aims for which they have worked have had much in common. Each with its own type of incertitude each with grave limitations on its power, has set about modernising the societies under its control; nationalism has sought to conserve the standing of some of those elites which imperialism had earlier raised up or confirmed; at various times, both have worked to win the support of the same allies. In India they have sometimes achieved similar results as well; each in its own fashion sharpened the rivalries that were already stirring in the country; each grappled with the countervailing forces thrown up... by the mobilisation of further ranges of its population."

This comparison of behavioural styles is meant to show that imperialism and anti-colonialism are intrinsically comparable and to be judged by equal criteria. The seeming verities of a Planitz invariably lose out to the behavioural science jugglery of a Seal. Historical comparison and contrast must be based on the deeper study of content and basis, rather than on the superstructural veneer of style.

In terms of historical content, anti-colonialism's social and economic base and consequent political aspirations were related to the welding of Indian nationality, in the nineteenth century, to the unified expression of national self-determination and to the struggle for political formation of an independent sovereign nation-state in the sub-continent. Anti-colonialism has, in fact, a broader ideology than the mere bourgeois demand for autonomous capitalism. Though such a demand inevitably takes leadership (in colonised countries without civil and social hegemony) over other social strata, and other classes which join in the freedom struggle.

The revolt of Mir Kasim against his British masters in 1763, the series of peasant uprisings against colonialism in the first and second centuries of the Raj, the Third Anglo-Maratha War of 1818-19, and the Second Anglo-Sikh War of 1848-49, or the Sepoy Mutiny and Indian Revolts of 1857-59 are all elements of this freedom struggle.<sup>10</sup> These were often internally contradictory process of the death throes of localised feudal political authority and of the growth—though initially ephemeral and in a scattered way—of feelings of resistance to the onward march of the Juggernaut of capitalist colonialism, which was consolidating vast Indian markets in the interests of the British imperial trade and security system. Such events left their mark



in local memories,<sup>81</sup> and in some areas were to rouse descendants of the resisters to join mass movements aroused by the Congress in the early decades of the twentieth century. All these movements cumulated in the growth of a new political consciousness of nationality—that of the twentieth century Indian national movement striving for self-determination against, at least, political imperialism.

Such a description of anti-colonial national movement has little in common with the Parsonian mishmarsh of sociology and its attendant jargon of “modernisation” (equated with the desirability of approximation to Westernised social, political and economic democracy), “conservation” and “circulation of elites”, game—theoretic collaborative action among “interest groups”, “mobilisation of feasible and limited objectives”, etc.

It is true that in a recent essay Seal is believed to have become more ‘sophisticated’ in his explanation of the social role of Indian nationalism:—

“The suggestion that government prepared its own destruction by fostering an intellectual elite is not relevant. Graduates and professional men in the presidencies undoubtedly had a large part in the politics of province and nation. But they were not quite as important as they once appeared. Some of the suggestions . . . in *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* . . . have dropped through the trapdoor of historiography.”<sup>82</sup>

Whatever this last metaphor may mean, Seal’s jettisoning of the only operational element in his ideas about the limitations of Indian nationalism, appears to be meant to salvage the sociological jargon, which is certainly not also cast overboard in his latest essay. He still believes that imperialism was as much a unifying and divisive force as nationalism, that nationalism was a loose federation of local level politics, and that both had equal rays of force and were parallel contenders for power and patronage. This is an interpretation meant to bring anti-colonialism down to the worm’s-eye view of imperialism that neo-colonialist defenders are forced to take in their ideological last ditch stand.

For, it can never be forgotten that there is an ideological purpose in the Gallagher-Seal version of the social origins of Indian nationalism in liberal imperialist philoprogenesis. A nationalism which indubitably had anti-colonial content,<sup>83</sup> must be denied autonomous validity, it must by intellectual acrobatics be demonstrated to be bedevilled by second-generation frustration at not getting the power on to which an aging sire continued to hold. Otherwise the true reasons for the rise of anti-colonialism in the British Indian Empire would have had to be confronted. The metropolitan exploitation of India’s agricultural production and its stunting of the Indian home market, the drainage of wealth caused by continual increase of assessment and taxa-

## TWO WAYS OF NATIONALISM

tion of harvested surplus from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries,"<sup>1</sup> the undercutting of Indian indigenous attempts at capitalist growth within the Empire;<sup>2</sup> however rickety and inevitably doomed such attempts might have been, the crippling racial disabilities placed by the *herrenvolk* on Indian middle class attempts to take at least bureaucratic equality with the former<sup>3</sup> gave second-rank status to Indian social and economic enterprise within a white-predominated Empire.<sup>4</sup>

Such a confrontation with historical facts is no part of neo-colonialist ideology. Shying away from the realities of the metropolitan-colonialised relationship is the point where Plamenatz's intellectualism and Seal's pragmatism converge.

Their account of nationalism in a colonial situation in general, and of Indian nationalism in particular, while it spotlights differences between nationalism in Western Europe and in the Third World totally perverts the elements of anti-colonial content in the latter. The circumstances of the freedom struggle against colonialism were quite different from those in which either nationalism or capitalism matured in Western Europe. The social, economic, and class content of the evolution of the anti-colonial freedom struggle is a matter for discussion in other papers.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Niharranjan Ray, *Nationalism in India* (Sir Syed Lectures, Founder's Day, 1972, Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Syed Hall Publications, No. 4, 1973), pp. 9-12.

<sup>2</sup> The earliest draft presenting a broader theoretical framework within which this conceptual exploration is essayed will be found in B. De "The Dialectical Relationship between Imperialism and Nationalism", Devraj Chandra Lectures at Delhi University, February, 1975 (mimeographed at Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta). The version of the present paper, first presented for publication in this volume, was based on generous clarificatory help from Professor Asok Sen. Professor Amiya Bagchi considerably aided my understanding by elucidating the dependance of Portuguese colonialism on the British imperialist trade pattern, and by criticising my confusion, in the version referred to above, of trends of freedom struggle such as the Indian Revolt of 1857 (which were not strictly nationalist in the bourgeois sense of the term) with merely feudal uprisings. As a result, I have been able to see the anti-colonial content of much that is loosely known as feudal uprisings in nineteenth century Indian history. Dr. Aniruddha Ray gave valuable insights on possibilities of misunderstandings created by my allusive references. Most of all, I am grateful to Shri Rudrangshu Mukherjee for generously spending time in checking the structure of the present version and for aid in documentation.

<sup>3</sup> The original source of such analysis is Asok Sen, "Marx, Weber and India Today", *Economic and Political Weekly*, VII, 5-7, Annual Number, February 1972; and his "Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and his Elusive Milestones", Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, *Occasional Paper*, I, 1975. Also see B. De "A Historical Critique of Renaissance Analogues for Nineteenth Century India" in *Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, I (forthcoming publication by Oxford University Press for CSSSC).

<sup>4</sup> D. W. Brogan, *The Development of Modern France* (H. Hamilton, London, 10th Imp. 1963), pp. 327-87, especially p. 352, footnote 1 and p. 368, footnote 1 for Barres' anti-*metecur* agitation.

<sup>5</sup> E. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Francaise, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (first published in trans. Munich, 1965: Mentor Edn., New York, 1969), Part Four, Sections 3 and 4.

<sup>6</sup> Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization, The Life of Greece* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1939), p. 248 and Ch. XVII, Sec. VI, No. 2, Aristophanes and the Radicals: George Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens, A Study in the Social Origins of Drama* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1941, reprint 1966), pp. 326-328.

<sup>7</sup> E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic* (Communications of the University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1967), p. 81: Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Clarendon Press, 1939, paperback edn. 1960), Chs. II to IX: Harold Mattingly, *Roman Imperial Civilization* (Edwin Arnold, London, 1957), pp. 58-9, and Chs. II-III.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfram Eberhard, *A History of China* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, and Edn 1960), pp. 233-34, 238-40, discusses the failure of nationality policy during the Mongol period: Henry Mcleavy, *The Modern History of China* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1967), pp. 23-26 describes the limitations that the Manchus had, in the creation of a national community.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Partha Chatterjee drew my attention to the distinction between nationality in this sense, and nationhood, or even of nationalism as a product of more heightened group consciousness by referring to Chang Chih-i, "A Discussion of the National Question in the Chinese Revolution and of Actual Nationalities Policy" in George Mosely (ed), *The Party and the National Question in China* (M.I.T. Press, Camb. Mass., 1966), pp. 26-159.

<sup>10</sup> Irfan Habib, "The Emergence of Indian Nationalities", *Social Scientist*, August, 1975, 37 (The National Question in India, Special Number), p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14. The stress on language as the sole basis of nationality or nationalism is taken from Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (1913).

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Partha Chatterjee, "Bengal: Rise and Growth of a Nationality", *Social Scientist*, *loc. cit.*, p. 67. See Asok Sen "Marx, Weber and India Today", EPW VII, 1972, *loc. cit.*, a paper written for the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1969, Seminar on "Historical Models of Tradition and Change in India".

<sup>18</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 68-69.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, footnote 3.

<sup>22</sup> Chatterjee also refers to Roman Rosdolsky "Worker and Fatherland: A Note on a Passage in the Communist Manifesto", *Science and Society*, 29, 1965, pp. 330-7: *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1946, Third Impression, 1952), pp. 120-22.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 45, 52, 65. More data on feudalism's integral connection with pillage and war income and on the place of the latter in the origins of the early mediaeval state is given in Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy, Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*. (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, tr. London, 1974).

<sup>25</sup> "Bastard feudalism" was the corrupted form of English feudalism in its decay, when it became a force of internecine war, rather than of agrarian order. This term was learnt from the late Mr. K. B. Macfarlane's lectures on the subject in Magdalen College Hall, Oxford in Hilary Term, 1956.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Panther Books, London, 1972: first edn. O.U.P., 1965): H. R. Trevor Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change, and Other Essays* (Macmillan, London, 2nd Edn., 1972), which in Chs. 2-4 gives an alternative view: Charles Webster (ed), *The Intellectual Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (Past and Present Series, Routledge, London, 1972) presents controversies on the issues involved.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (2nd Edn., Penguin, 1974), p. 295.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 295 quoting *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, *op. cit.*, O.U.P. edn., pp. 127, 66.

<sup>30</sup> In the interests of general recognizability, I have eschewed here the term for civil institutions, which I myself prefer—"civil society": *vide* Antonio Gramsci's comment "A distinction must be made between civil society as understood by Hegel and as often used in these notes (i.e. in the sense of political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the entire society,

## TWO WAYS OF NATIONALISM

as ethical content of the State) and on the other hand civil society in the sense in which it is understood by Catholics, for whom civil society is . . . political society . . . in contrast with the society of the family and the society of the Church". The meaning "used in" his "notes" is what Gramsci also calls "egemonia" which is translatable as "civil and social hegemony". Gramsci also wrote elsewhere about 'Illitch' (Lenin's) critique of 'Bronstein' (Trotsky's) theory of permanent revolution " . . . the fundamental task was a national one, it required a reconnaissance of the terrain and identification of the elements of trench and fortress represented by the elements of civil society, etc. In Russia, the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West there was a proper relation between the state and civil society and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one state to the next, it goes without saying—but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaissance of each individual country". Writing about "egemonia" in the analysis of the total ideological pre-eminence of the proletariat of Soviet Russia, Gramsci speaks of the Philosophy of Praxis "Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say, political consciousness) is the first stage towards a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one. The political development of the concept of hegemony represents a great philosophical advance as well as a politico-practical one. For it necessarily supposes an intellectual unity and an ethic in conformity with a conception of reality that has gone beyond common sense and has become, only within narrow limits, a critical conception." *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, International Publishers, New York, 1971), pp. 208, 238, and 233.

<sup>11</sup> Habib, *loc. cit.*, footnote, 15.

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed study of the methodological implications of Marx's views on the reasons for Spanish structural stagnation, B. De "Historical Critique of Renaissance Analogies", *Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, I (forthcoming), *loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx, "Revolutionary Spain I" in *Karl Marx: Historical Writings. In Two Volumes* (ed. Clemens Dutt, People's Publishing House, Bombay, n.d.), Vol. II, p. 769.

<sup>14</sup> As I use it, the term "historical overdetermination" is simply shorthand for excessive weightage of factors which determine immediate, i.e., short-range happenings, thus stultifying possibilities of logically working out dialectics implicit in the previous formation, from which transformation is taking place or was possible. It has not any relevance with the abstruse philosophy of Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (tr. by Ben Brewster, Pantheon Books, New York, 1969), Ch. III or with Althusser's usage in particularly p. 101.

<sup>15</sup> R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution, . . . 1760-1800*, Vol. 1, The Challenge (Princeton University Press, and O.U.P., 1959), p. 397. Palmer also uses R. Herr, *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton, 1958) to note on p. 398 that despite Charles III's attempts at social engineering "the effect of the French Revolution, in Spain and elsewhere, was to throw doubt on enlightened despotism as a means of social progress."

<sup>16</sup> Irfan Habib "An Examination of Wittfogel's theory of 'Oriental Despotism'", *Studies in Asian History: Proceedings of the Asian History Congress* (ed. by K. S. Lal for Indian Council of Cultural Relations, Asia Publishing House, New Delhi and Bombay, 1969), pp. 378-392; and "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in India", *Enquiry* (Winter, 1971, N.S., Vol. III [Old Series, No. 15]).

<sup>17</sup> Hobsbawm, "Pre-capitalist Formations", *op. cit.*, 60-64. Irfan Habib "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", *Science and Human Progress: Essays in Honour of the Late Professor D. D. Kosambi* (Bombay, 1974), 38-39 says that Hobsbawm is re-opening a case for 'Asiatic exceptionalism' which Habib believes was "rescued" from the early Marxist texts by the propagandists of imperialism and used to jeer at revolutionaries in Asia, when revolutionary tides rose high there. "In 1957 Wittfogel published his *Oriental Despotism* . . . a detailed elaboration of the unfortunate theses that Marx had once propounded." This has not stood the test of either propaganda or academic necessities. But "modern revisionism has now picked up the weapon that imperialism has all but discarded . . . in spite of the general inability of Asian Marxist scholars to recognise the existence of the Asiatic mode of production, certain Marxists of western European countries have begun to insist that they know better and have re-opened that debate among themselves." Professor Habib is entirely right in his critique of Wittfogel. But his identification of Wittfogel with the early Marx misses the point of Marx's own method of paradigm-contrast which the latter used as late as *Das Kapital* and certainly in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. Also it is not enough to quote a few of Engels' comments in *Anti-Duhring* on Turks or Moors in the context of feudalism (vide pp. 36-37), to prove that the idea of a non-Western

paradigm was not implicit in Marx's writings. There is sufficient data to the contrary. cf. B. De "Historical Critique of Renaissance Analogues", *loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *The National Question in Kerala* (People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1952); D. D. Kosambi *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1956); S. C. Sarkar, "The Historical Approach in Marx", *Das Kapital Centenary Volume: A Symposium* (ed. by Mohit Sen and M. B. Rao, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1968), p. 43.

<sup>29</sup> Habib overstates his own case in saying that "the last word on . . . the international applicability of the pattern [Primitive Communism → Slavery → Feudalism → Capitalism] was said by Stalin in his classic essay on Dialectical and Historical Materialism, 1938" ("Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", *loc. cit.*, p. 40). But one can follow his own substantive proposition (as always far more valid when he does not rely on Stalin for comprehending Indian historical development) that "whether the path traversed in a particular country was P-S-F-C or P-F-S-C" (he had been talking about the late development of slavery in the old colonies of the USA) "or P-X-Y-Z-C where C represents capitalism/colonialism stage, does not reflect the essentials of the Marxist conception. The crucial thing is the definition of principal contradictions (i.e. class contradictions) in a society . . . marking out the factors responsible for intensifying them, and . . . delineation of the shaping of the social order, when a particular contradiction is resolved." (*ibid.*)

<sup>30</sup> Marx never spelled this out in so many words. Excellent data for the Indian case will be found in Hiroshi Fukazawa "State and Caste System (Jati) in the Eighteenth Century Maratha Kingdom", *Hitoatsubashi Journal of Economics* (Vol. 9, No. 1, June 1968), p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Marx, *Notes on Indian History* (1864-1858) (Russian Edn., 1947, II, by Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow) displays the Islamocentric bias of his knowledge of non-Western European history. The first entry runs "First Arab entry into India, A.D. 664 (Year 41 of the Hepta)." The next entry is "632, Mohammed died", followed by a chronicle of the eastward thrust of Islamic captains in Sind. Marx's data on these points were largely gathered from the histories of India of Mill and Elphinstone. Like them, he considered the history of the pre-Islamic age to be largely mythological: perhaps because in the mid-nineteenth century, literary sources known for Ancient India lacked the chronological or pseudo-objective framework of Persian and Arabic chronicles; and epigraphic and literary sources had not been sufficiently quarried to give weight to scattered and unclassified archaeological and numismatic data. Marx was biased against Islamic political authority: perhaps dating from his and Engels' early infatuation with Bernier's Eurocentric account of "Oriental" camps and cities (Marx to Engels, June 2, 1853, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, FLPH, Moscow). This outlook is briefly summated in his classic reference to the "Asiatic" mode in Karl Marx, *1 Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (new edn., Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970). Shahque Naqvi's unsympathetic critique of Marx's approach to Asiatic developments, nevertheless underscores Marx's misunderstanding of mediaeval conditions in India: "Marx on Pre-British Society and Economy", *Indian Social and Economic History Review*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Dec. 1972.

<sup>32</sup> The simplest approximation of such a correlation - between lowest castes and menial forms of agricultural labour, performed by Chandala jatis in U.P. - was first pointed out to me by Irfan Habib on a back-bench in a Delhi University History Seminar on Ideas and History held in 1964.

<sup>33</sup> M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Univ. of California Press, 1966, Indian Edn., Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1972); Chs. I (Sanskritization) and III (Some Expressions of Caste Mobility). On p. 177 Srinivas notes that modern changes could not have come about without Westernization, to which he devotes Ch. II. The Srinivas approach to history is one of acceptance of the cultural aspects of colonialisation.

<sup>34</sup> A brief summary of Prof. Ray's views on such movements will be found in Niharranjan Ray "Socio-Religious Movements of Protest in Medieval India" in Symposium on Social Protest and Religious Movements in Ancient Medieval and Modern India, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 36th Session, Aligarh, 1975 (Calcutta 1976).

<sup>35</sup> " . . . all that the collective but weak voices of criticism and protest could achieve was a certain amount of liberalization of the official position in certain sectors of the society but no over-all change in the hold of the official pattern, nothing to speak of the basic social structure" . . . "caste was much more than a mere socio-religious system . . . it amounted to . . . the over-all productive organisation which used to regulate the rural agricultural economic life of India through the ages. No collective voice or movement of criticism and protest did ever aim

their blows against this productive system, not even criticise it: indeed they could not, since there was no other alternative production system in sight. Once the critical and protestant communities fell into this productive system, they too became props of the very same social structure of which the productive system was but an inherent and essential element". *ibid.* The only qualification I would make here is that in Marxist terms, social structure is an element of production relations, not the other way round. Also see Surendra Gopal "Social Attitudes of Indian Trading Communities in the Seventeenth Century", *Essays in Honour of Prof. S. C. Sarkar* (People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976), pp. 193-199.

<sup>44</sup> Pertinent comments on the retarded processes of social change and class struggle will be found in the conclusions of A. I. Chicherov, *India, Economic Development in the 16th-18th Centuries* ("Nanka", Moscow, 1971), pp. 236-7: *vide*: "Even though many enterprises, engaged in diamond mining, ship-building, iron-making, etc. exhibited some new elements of the organisation of labour, they still retained many features of the old mode of production: feudal regimentation, the as yet immature system of free hire of labour power, the lack of status distinctions between master and workman, etc. . . . the new relations of production were only emerging in the feudal economy. . . . from the latter part of the 17th century throughout the 18th and in the early 19th century feudal reaction weakened, undermined and at times even succeeded in fully destroying the economic relations then taking shape. . . . India's as yet poorly developed merchant-and-industrial elements, who . . . were subjected to destructive pressures by feudal reaction, were still further weakened economically and politically when the Europeans largely cut them off from the highly profitable foreign markets and to a greater or smaller degree reduced them to . . . subordinate 'partners' of the highly developed and . . . organised English bourgeoisie in the commercial exploitation of the sub-continent."

<sup>45</sup> Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Hindu Samaj Garhan* (The Structure of Hindu Society in Bengali—Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1949) gave modern content to Hindu traditionalism by formulating caste as an economic hierarchy, which maintains the social organisation of subsistence agriculture by the lowest, at the base of the pyramid. Surajit Sinha "Caste in India: Its Essential Pattern of Socio-Cultural Integration," *Caste and Race: Comparative Approaches*, ed. by Anthony de Renck and Julie Knight (CIBA Foundation, London, 1967) rationalises Prof. Bose's views into an unfortunate marriage with Marx's statements on 'Asiatic' societies and their unchangeableness. This line of argument overemphasises the dissimilarity between Indian and world norms of social change, instead of probing the historical reasons for divergence.

<sup>46</sup> This is a line of enquiry, far more fruitful than those practised by Nirmal Kumar Bose himself, originated as early as 1959 by Surajit Sinha "State Formation and Tribal Myth in Rajput Central India", *Man in India*, 42, no. 1, pp. 35-80.

<sup>47</sup> The attempt in K. A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism* (Yale University Press, 1957, 3rd printing, 1959), Ch. 9, B.I. to "rescue" that part of Marx's thought which was useful to his purposes, from the premises of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, is even more farfetched than Oswald Spengler's wildest heuristics. Irfan Habib in *Studies in Asian History*, *loc cit.*, demolishes Wittfogel's specific detail. As regards Habib's later counterdependence on Wittfogel's spurious methodology, see *supra* footnote 37.

<sup>48</sup> Luiz Vaz de Camoens, *The Lusads* (Penguin, tr. by William C. Atkinson, 1952). That last outpost in the Indian press of Westernised liberalism, the Calcutta Statesman, September 14, 1976, p. 6, featured "'Obrigada' said Amalia Rodriguez" by Richard Wigg, who appreciatively noting the new Portuguese Social-Democratic government's attack on ultra revolutionary political consciousness and literature, described how a popular singer of *fado*, a fatalistic version of folk-song, had returned to public singing as part of the mood of return to anti-left outlook in Portugal, and had "said 'Salazar did not invent the *fado*. It goes back five centuries to the time of the Portuguese discoveries and Camoens often talks of *triste fado* (sad fate) . . . I am like a child perhaps, I felt so proud of Portugal when it had all those colonies'. She concluded simply 'I am Portuguese'."

<sup>49</sup> C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (Penguin, 1973), pp. 377 and 378.

<sup>50</sup> English-language studies of Portugal concentrate on its nationalist and imperialist grandeur and decline. Practically none deal with their relationship to Portuguese rickety capitalism. Lacking knowledge of the languages, I have been unable to read F. Mauro, *Le Portugal et l'Atlantique au XVIIe Siècle, 1570-1670, Etude Economique* (Paris, 1960) and F. Magalhães-Godinho, *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial* (2 Vols., Lisbon, 1965-68).

<sup>51</sup> A curious relic of the Anglo-Portuguese patron-client relationship is the Camoens cult, to be found in the older type of imperialist classicist English scholarship. Boxer held the Camoens Professorship of Portuguese Literature in London University. Tom Nairn, "Portrait



of Enoch Powell, *New Left Review*, No. 61 (London, May-June, 1970), pp. 21-22, describes a curiously integral element in the neo-colonial ideology of the ex-Professor of Greek, turned Housmanite sickly romancer, and now racist demagogue: "Powell has always been riveted by the notion of the national destiny, re-emerging from betrayal and ruin. One of his early poems is about the Portuguese national poet Camoes ship-wrecked in the Mekong Delta in the 16th century: 'Black the mountains of Timor/Sweeping from the sea/Saw Camoes drift ashore, rags and misery.' But the poet was to be saved from death to complete the great national epic *Os Lusíadas* and even in the depths of his degradation held in one battered hand 'a jointed scum-stalk/hidden in the hollow rod/slept like heavenly flame/Titan-stolen from a God/Lusitania's flame.' (Poem VI, *Os Lusíadas*, *Dancer's End*)."

<sup>44</sup> For details, see C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1806* (Penguin, 1973); Violet Barbour, *Capitalism in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, 1950); and R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, op. cit., Ch. XI, Section on the Dutch Revolution.

<sup>45</sup> John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances* (Secker and Warburg, London, 1963) and his earlier *Culloden* make it now possible to objectively reconstruct the decline of Scots feudalism as a result of English and Lowland Scots land-hungry attack. Earlier romanticised versions through the classical historical novels will be found in Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*, and R. L. Stevenson's *Kidnapped*.

<sup>46</sup> An early account of the formation of the Manchester lobby is Arthur Redford, *Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade*, Vol. 1 (Manchester University Press, 1954); A. Tripathi, *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency, 1783 to 1833* (Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1956) describes attempts to weaken Charter rights in 1793.

<sup>47</sup> H. J. Habakkuk, "English Landownership: 1680-1740," *Economic History Review*, 1940 and "Marriage Settlements in the Eighteenth Century", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1950, presents the orthodox interpretation of only pull; that in the 18th century, magnates consolidated landholding and only the richest parvenus could enter their ranks by outbidding the squirearchy. A recent case study of Lincolnshire shows, however, that the market throughout continued to be far more open; vide R. A. Holderness, "The English Land Market in the Eighteenth Century: Case of Lincolnshire", *Economic History Review*, Nov. 1974.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Bence-Jones, *Clive of India* (Constable, London, 1974), studying Robert Clive's private and business correspondence and accounts, describes how colonialism, from 1740 to 1770 in Madras and Bengal in the arenas of trade, politics and war, enabled that archetypal Nabob, a scion of well-to-do Shropshire gentry, to become a Lord with five country seats, a parliamentary 'interest', and extensive estates in the Marcher counties; and also how neurotically brittle was this *nouveaux-riche* social pre-eminence—Clive, for instance was liable to hysteria, and ultimately cut his own throat.

<sup>49</sup> A lucid Marxian account of the complexities of the social character of the British ruling class and of its ideology at this time will be found in E. P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English", *Socialist Register* (London, 1965).

<sup>50</sup> H. Seton Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855-1914* (Praeger, New York printing, 1961), Ch. IV: Rondo F. Cameron, *France and the Economic Development of Europe* (Princeton, 1961), Chs. IX and XIII: Roger Portal, "The Industrialisation of Russia", *The Cambridge Economic History*, Vol. VI, Pt. 2 (1966), pp. 801-72; M. S. Falkus, *The Industrialisation of Russia, 1700-1914* (Economic History Society, Studies, Macmillan, 1972), pp. 70-72, particularly 71.

<sup>51</sup> T. Campbell, "Ye Mariners of England" reprinted in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (chosen and edited), *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1900* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1918), No. 580, p. 673.

<sup>52</sup> "The history of the people is the province of the poet" wrote Pushkin in 1825. For him, the poet's imagination, his invention in general, did not entrain an inevitable distortion of history. In his novels, as in Walter Scott's novels, events are interwoven with personal memoirs or a family chronicle. . . . The historical figures appear only in the background but they are drawn into the circle of everyday human relationships and thus lose their traditional grandeur and remoteness." Rosemary Edmonds, Introduction to translation of Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter and The Negro of Peter the Great* (Neville Spearman, London, 1958), p. ix. These aspects of Pushkin and Scott, as well as of Mickiewicz (vide *Pan Tadeusz*) and Fenimore Cooper (*The Last of the Mohicans*) are formally linked as an epitome of romantic consciousness of the tension between metropolis and frontier culture in eighteenth century Russia and Britain, and also of the replacement of feudal prototypes by more individuated relationships in Donald Davie's *The Heyday of Sir Walter Scott* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1961).

## TWO WAYS OF NATIONALISM

<sup>43</sup> Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> *vide* Amales Tripathi, *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency* (Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1956) for the operation of British manufacturers' lobbies: Benoy Chaudhuri, *Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal (1757-1900)* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1964), K. N. Chaudhuri, "Introduction", *The Economic Development of India under the East India Company, 1814-1858* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971), and Asok Sen "The Bengal Economy and Rammohun Roy", in V. C. Joshi (ed.) *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India* (Vikas, New Delhi, 1975) which gives a masterly elucidation of the major issues in the period of India being transformed into a raw material exporter; C. H. Harler, *The Culture and Marketing of Tea* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1956) and Pabitra Bhaskar Sinha, *Development of the Mineral Industries of Bihar* (Muzaffarpur, 1975) for plantation and mining history.

<sup>45</sup> J. D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (Penguin, 1972) has in the earlier chapters, a careful account of such a trend.

<sup>46</sup> George W. Spenser, "The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh Century Ceylon", *Journal of Asian Studies* (Vol. XXV, No. 3), May 1976 brings out well these motive forces in pre-capitalist Indian imperialism, without showing realization that these motive forces also operated in European feudal imperialism.

<sup>47</sup> The term "subaltern intelligentsia" is my own coinage. It represents the same formation in the sphere of leadership of thought in anti-colonialism, that "dependant bourgeoisie" (A. K. Bagchi's coinage in the last chapter of his *Private Investment in India, 1900-39*, Camb. Univ. Press, 1972) represents in the sphere of its entrepreneurship—competition with the metropolitan liberal bourgeoisie, but incapacity to play a hegemonistic or dominating role which could extrude the alien metropolitan influences of colonialism; so that this intellectual or entrepreneurial leadership remained in a relatively assisting position *vis-a-vis* the colonialism it had learned to oppose. However the richness of the term "subaltern" is learnt from Gramsci's very nebulous thoughts on the role of the Italian nineteenth century Moderates in intellectual trends in the Italian Risorgimento against Austria. *vide* *Prison Notebooks*, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53 beginning thus "The subaltern classes by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a 'State'; their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society. . . . ." See translation entitled "Notes on Italian History", particularly pp. 102-104 and 106-7. On the last pages, Gramsci derives his idea about "subaltern" social formations from aëllipsis of Marx's ideas in Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* where the latter related social orders to all the productive forces within which there was room for the former.

<sup>48</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol. I: 1889-1947 (Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1976) states, with remarkably lucid brevity, the circumstances of such development in nineteenth century India.

<sup>49</sup> "Bolivar Y. Ponte" written by either Marx or Engels for *New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. III, 1858 demonstrates their factual approach to the military struggle implicit in these uprisings (Karl Marx, *Historical Writings*, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 872-876): G. Pendle, *A History of Latin America* (Penguin, 1963): Celso Furtado, *Latin America: A Study from Colonial Times to the Cuban Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1970), Part I.

<sup>50</sup> The imperialist/nationalist dichotomy is described in George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (H. Hamilton, London, 1936): the idiom of intellectual nationalism is described in Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Oxford University Press, 1962) and in Sylvia Haim, *Arab Nationalism, An Anthology* (University of California Press, 1964).

<sup>51</sup> European colonialism is analysed according to its own valuation in Robinson, Gallagher and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, *op. cit.*: and exposed in its exploitative political economy in Samir Amin, *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa* (Penguin, 1973). The intellectual response to all this by one segment of early African nationalism is analysed by Thomas Hodgkin "Some Africans and Third World Theories of Imperialism", *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (ed. by R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe, Longmans, London, 1972).

<sup>52</sup> Legge, *Sukarno*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>53</sup> Partha Chatterjee, "Modern American Political Theory with reference to Underdeveloped Nations", *Social Scientist*, No. 24, July, 1974, pp. 24-42.

<sup>54</sup> John Plamenatz, *Alien Rule and Self-Government* (Longmans, London, 1960), pp. 2, 5, 7, 14, 16-17.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 95, 71-72.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 141, footnote 1.

<sup>57</sup> This point is analytically elaborated in B. De, "Bengal Renaissance and British Colonialism, 1815-1857" forthcoming in *School of Oriental and African Studies, London, volume*, edited by Sir C. H. Philips and M. D. Wainwright (1976).



## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

<sup>10</sup> "The Brazilian 'national' bourgeoisie, no less than the 'comprador' bourgeoisie has fully participated in the neo-fascist military dictatorship and the events which followed." "National capitalism and the national bourgeoisie do not and cannot show any way out of underdevelopment in Latin America", Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (first published by Monthly Review Press, 1969, Pelican edn. 1971), pp. 14, 15. In p. 144 and Section I, 1. Frank presents a one-sided picture imputing lack of revolutionary potential in policies led by "the most exploited and weakest interests of the Chilean bourgeoisie".

<sup>11</sup> Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1970 reprint), p. 351.

<sup>12</sup> Rudrangshu Mukherjee, "The Azimgarh Proclamation and Some Questions on the Revolt of 1857 in the Northwestern Provinces", *Essays in Honour of Prof. S. C. Sarkar, op. cit.*, pp. 489-491.

<sup>13</sup> "One incident of the Mutiny deserves attention: nothing historical but trouble then begun has lasted to the present day: . . . some six miles from Madhuban is the estate of Dubari. It was then held by six Mal (Kurmi) brothers. Five joined the rebels. One did not. Government confiscated the estates of the five, and made them over to Mr. Venables who had taken a prominent part in the suppression of the Mutiny. In the late nineties, his widow sold it to Chaudhri [name suppressed in the text] of Lucknow. The descendants of the five Mals are now his tenants; those of the sixth are still zamindars. All look upon Chaudhri . . . as an usurper and his unsympathetic attitude has always made Dubari, a cauldron of agrarian agitation" R. H. Niblett, *The Congress Rebellion in Azamgarh August and September, 1942* (Government of U.P., Allahabad, 1957), p. 1. Niblett was forced to defend the Madhuban *thana* from an armed attack by Madhuban rebels in August, 1942.

<sup>14</sup> Anil Seal, "Imperialism and Nationalism in India", *Locality, Province and Nation*, ed. by John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), p. 6 and footnote 4.

<sup>15</sup> This anti-colonial content is brought out most clearly by Bipan Chandra, *Modern India* (NCERT, New Delhi, 1970).

<sup>16</sup> This, and a range of other problems, focussing on the immiserisation of British India, is brilliantly analyzed in Irfan Habib, "Colonialization of the Indian Economy, 1757-1900", *Social Scientist*, No. 32, March, 1975, pp. 23-55.

<sup>17</sup> F. R. Harris, *Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata: A Chronicle of His Life* (Bombay, 1958 edn.) gives many instances of Government collusion with European business in endeavouring to create barriers to Tata entering new markets in steam navigation and iron and steel prospecting.

<sup>18</sup> B. De, "Brajendranath De and John Beames: The Interaction of Patriotism and Paternalism in the ICS at the time of the Ilbert Bill: 1883", *Bengal, Past and Present*, June-December, 1962.

<sup>19</sup> The *locus classicus* on the subject of Indian enterprise is Amiya Kumar Bagchi, *Private Investment in India*, *op. cit.* Data on *herrenvolk* racial discrimination against Indian skilled labour and entrepreneurs will be found on p. 153, and Section 6.3. Official or Semi-Official Measures of Discrimination against Indian Businessmen, pp. 165-170.

# Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class : 1936

BIPAN CHANDRA

JAWAHARLAL Nehru grew more and more radical during 1933-36<sup>1</sup> for various reasons, ranging from the impact of the world depression on India and the world and the resulting crisis and collapse of the capitalist system, portending intense social change everywhere, and the culmination of his own intellectual development since 1926-27, fed by the voracious reading he did in jail during 1932-35, to the defeat suffered by the nationalist movement during 1932-34 and his constant incarceration during these years. Not only does he lay claim to be a revolutionary,<sup>2</sup> but his leftism becomes less and less vague and woolly. He begins to see almost every aspect of Indian politics in a clearer light at the plane of thought and, of course, does so with his usual passion. Not only questions of theory, but even those of the perspectives, social content, social base and the political strategy of the national movement are seen in a more radical, well-formed way. This is his most Marxist phase; the Indian summer of his leftism. His most recent biographer has described the Nehru of 1927-28 as a "self-conscious revolutionary radical":<sup>3</sup> he was during 1933-36 on the verge of becoming a Marxist revolutionary, anti-imperialist.<sup>4</sup>

The transition was long, in the making, and it was never<sup>5</sup> completed. But its near-last phase can be said to begin systematically and publicly with his articles "Whither India" published in October 1933 and to come to a brilliant fruition in his Presidential Address to the Lucknow Congress in April 1936. In between came a number of speeches and articles, letters and prison-diaries, and the *Autobiography*.

The radical Nehru produced consternation among the Indian capitalists and the right-wing in the Congress. They took certain steps to counter and contain him, thereby revealing a long-term strategy to deal with him and others like him. This paper examines the radicalism of Nehru that frightened the capitalists as well as their counter-strategy.

## I

Nehru's commitment to socialism finds a clearer and sharper expression during 1933-36. Already he had declared himself a socialist in 1929 in his Presidential Address to the Lahore Congress, but the conception of socialism had been rather vague.<sup>6</sup> He was veering round to Marxism but there was as yet no "deep absorption" of Marxism.<sup>7</sup>

Now, he repeatedly justified socialism and communism—and he used the two terms synonymously—and declared that they had "science and logic on their side";<sup>8</sup> and, in October 1933, confidently answered the question "Whither India?" "Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the frame-work of an international cooperative socialist world federation."<sup>9</sup> And in December 1933, he wrote: "The true civic ideal is the socialist ideal, the communist ideal".<sup>10</sup> He had some reservation regarding the communists, he was also critical of the Comintern's tactics,<sup>11</sup> but in the end he gave his commitment squarely to communism: ". . . fundamentally the choice before the world today is one between some form of Communism and some form of Fascism, . . . There is no middle road between Fascism and Communism. One has to choose between the two and I choose the Communist ideal."<sup>12</sup> This commitment he put in unequivocal and passionate words at Lucknow on 20 April 1936: "I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism . . . I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation, and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism."<sup>13</sup>

Nehru also defined the terms capitalism and socialism more clearly and scientifically. The word 'capitalism', he said in October 1933, could "mean only one thing: the economic system that has developed since the industrial revolution . . . capitalism means the developed system of production for profit based on private ownership of the means of production." Similarly, socialism was seen as a radically different social system. It was not to be defined "in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense." It involved "vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry."<sup>14</sup> In particular he pinpointed the attack on the private ownership of the means of production.<sup>15</sup> Socialism meant, he told his Lucknow audience, "the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative system."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, one could not be both for socialism and for capitalism, for "the nationalisation or the instruments of production and distribution" as well as for their

private ownership. Of course there could be "half-way houses" on the road, "but one can hardly have two contradictory and conflicting process going on side by side. The choice must be made and for one who aims at socialism there can be only one choice."<sup>17</sup>

Nehru also emphasized the role of class analysis and class struggle. In a press interview on 17 September 1933, he said that every person should be enabled to "realise exactly where he and his class and group stand". So far as class struggle was concerned, he pointed out that it was a fact of life and history all over the world. "Class struggles have always existed and exist today", only "people interested in maintaining the *status quo* try to hide this fact" and then accused others of "fomenting class struggles". Class struggle, said Nehru, was not "created but recognized". The political task was to remove the cloak used to hide the reality. Then it would be disclosed that "some classes dominate the social order, and exploit other classes", and the remedy would only lie "in the ending of that exploitation."<sup>18</sup>

Going beyond economics, Nehru began to criticise even the political institutions of the bourgeois social order, thus undermining the hegemony of bourgeois political ideology structured by the national movement since 1880s, and continuing through the Gandhian era. Though committed to political democracy and civil liberties, he was clear in his mind that "if political or social institutions stand in the way of such a change ('establishment of a socialist order'), they have to be removed".<sup>19</sup> Moreover, he wrote in 1936, even political democracy was acceptable "only in the hope that this will lead to social democracy," for "political democracy is only the way to the goal and is not the final objective."<sup>20</sup> So far as the establishment of socialism by democratic means was concerned, that too was not likely in practice, though it remained a possibility in theory, because "the opponents of socialism will reject the democratic method when they see their power threatened." The democratic method had so far not succeeded anywhere "in resolving a conflict about the very basic structure of the state or of society. When this question arises, the group or class which controls the state-power does not voluntarily give it up because the majority demands it." In fact, "Ruling powers and ruling classes have not been known in history to abdicate willingly."<sup>21</sup>

It was also to be noted, he wrote in October 1933, that the West European political doctrines of democracy and liberty served only the capitalist classes. In the absence of economic equality, "the vote . . . was of little use" and in practice, "exploitation of man by man and group by group increased". The result was that the liberal doctrine of "government of the people, by the people and for the people" was translated in practice as "a government by the possessing classes for their own benefit". Consequently, concluded Nehru,

even this liberal doctrine could be established only "when the masses held power, that is under socialism".<sup>22</sup>

Nehru also began to escape from the Gandhian dichotomy of conversion versus coercion. Making a beginning in jail in March 1933, he told Gandhi that his weekly *Harijan* was not likely "to convert a single bigoted *Sanatani*", for, as John Stuart Mill had pointed out, "the convictions of the mass of mankind run hand in hand with their interests or class feelings".<sup>23</sup> In an interview to the *Pioneer* on 31 August 1933, he asserted that "a complete reconstruction of society on a new basis" meant "the diversion of profits and property from the 'haves' to the 'have-nots' " and it could not be supposed "that vested interests will ever voluntarily agree to that."<sup>24</sup>

Taking up the theme for systematic treatment in October 1933 in his articles "Whither India". Nehru pointed out that the whole principle of the State was based on coercion as was also the present social system. "Is not coercion and enforced conformity the very basis of both?" he asked. In fact, "Army, police, laws, prisons, taxes are all methods of coercion. The zaminder who realises rent and often many illegal cesses relies on coercion, not on conversion of the tenants. The factory owner who gives starvation wages does not rely on conversion. Hunger and the organised forces of the State are the coercive processes employed by both." It did not, therefore, lie in the mouths of the possessing classes "to talk of conversion". The real question was to end the vested interests, to bring the ruling classes and their exploitation to an end. Even Gandhi accepted the principle of divesting the vested interests. But how was this to be done? History did not show any "instance of a privileged class or group or nation giving up its special privileges or interests willingly". This had always required "a measure of coercion". India was not going to be an exception. Here too "coercion or pressure is necessary to bring about political and social change". In fact, the non-violent mass movements of India since 1919 had been precisely such processes of coercion or pressure; they were meant "to coerce the other party". Even non-violent non-cooperation was to be viewed not "as a negative and passive method", but "as an active, dynamic and forceful method of enforcing the mass will".<sup>25</sup>

Nehru took up the theme again in his *Autobiography* and devoted a whole chapter to gently combating this basic aspect of the Mahatma's ideology. "Economic interests," he pointed out, "shape the political views of groups and classes. Neither reason nor moral considerations override these interests." It was, therefore, "an illusion to imagine that a dominant imperialist power will give up its domination over a country, or that a class will give up its superior position and privileges unless effective pressure, amounting to coercion, is exercised".<sup>26</sup> At the end of the chapter, he took up a clear-cut position: If the aim of "a classless society with equal economic justice

and opportunity for all" was to be realised, "everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary. And there seems to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary."<sup>27</sup>

Throughout these years, he pointed to the inadequacy of the existing nationalist ideology and stressed the need for inculcating a new ideology which would enable the people to study their condition scientifically.<sup>28</sup> One reason why he favoured the continuation of the civil disobedience movement, even after its virtual defeat, lay in the belief that the continuation of the political crisis favoured the spread of new ideas among the masses and the intelligentsia.<sup>29</sup>

The words "new ideology", found so often in his letters, essays, and speeches of the period stood in reality for Marxism for he explicitly accepted the general validity of Marxism as "the scientific interpretation of history and politics and economics" and as representing "the scientific socialism" in contrast to "a vague and idealistic socialism".<sup>30</sup> On 15 May, 1936, he told the Indian Progressive Group of Bombay that "scientific socialism, or Marxism was the only remedy for the ills of the world".<sup>31</sup> On 17 May, he told a meeting of Congress Socialists that history as well as the contemporary state of affairs "could not be explained except by socialism and Marxism."<sup>32</sup> Nehru accepted the entire Marxist analysis of the economic crisis of monopoly capitalism and of imperialism and the need for its overthrow. The crisis of capitalism, he wrote in 1933, was essentially "due to the ill distribution of the world's wealth; to its concentration in a few hands". Moreover, "the disease seems to be of the essence of capitalism and grows with it". The heart of the matter was that the capitalist system was "no longer suited to the present methods of production". The answer, therefore, lay in "a new system in keeping with the new technique"; in other words, "the way of socialism".<sup>33</sup>

Nehru also made his own the contemporary Marxist analysis of Fascism, and this at a time when many 'general' radicals were being attracted by the superficial 'leftist' programme and stance, popular base, discipline, and organizational success of Fascism in Europe and Asia. Fascism arose, wrote Nehru, because the failure of the capitalist order had led to a powerful challenge by the working class. "This challenge, when it has become dangerous, has induced the possessing classes to sink their petty differences and band themselves together to fight the common foe. This had led to Fascism."<sup>34</sup> At Lucknow Nehru concluded his analysis of world affairs by contrasting the failure of capitalism with the success of the socialist experiment in the Soviet Union and openly held up Soviet socialism as the social alternative to capitalism.<sup>35</sup> Nehru was not all praise for the new state. There were "defects and mistakes and ruthlessness".<sup>36</sup> There was much there that had "pained" him.<sup>37</sup> Yet the "new era" was no longer "a dream of the future", for it was "taking

visible, vital shape" in the USSR, "stumbling occasionally but ever marching forward".<sup>38</sup> This "new order and a new civilization" was "the most promising feature of our dismal age".<sup>39</sup>

Having made a radical critique of world capitalism-imperialism, Nehru began to argue for the integration of India's anti-imperialist struggle with Asia's struggle against colonialism and the world struggle against capitalism "for the emancipation of the oppressed".<sup>40</sup> In his Lucknow Address, Nehru developed the linkage further. India's problem was "but a part of the world problem of capitalism-imperialism". Moreover, socialism in Europe and America and the nationalist movements in Africa and Asia formed a single camp against that of Fascism and imperialism.<sup>41</sup> Thus Nehru's internationalism of the period was politically significant and quite radical; he hoped to use it to radicalise Indian politics and to spread socialist consciousness and ideology among the Indian people.

## II

During the years 1933-36, Nehru increasingly extended his new ideological grasp to the Indian national movement and demanded a change in its basic strategy and organizational structure.

First of all, he challenged the basic nationalist political strategy followed by the Congress leadership since the 1880's; that is, the strategy of advancing towards political power and independence by stages arrived at through a series of compromises to be forced on the colonial power through the application of ever increasing political pressure. In previous articles, I have described this strategy as that of Pressure-Compromise-Pressure or P.C.P.<sup>42</sup> Under this strategy, political pressure, usually through a mass movement, is applied, political concessions are secured, there is a period of 'peaceful co-operation', however disguised, with the colonial political structure, when 'goodwill' prevails on both sides, preparations are meanwhile made for another round of pressure or mass movements, till the cycle is repeated, the repetition being an upward spiralling one. The political advance came, according to this strategy, through the political or constitutional actions of the constituted authority, that is, the British Government. On the other hand, seizure of political power was ruled out by the inherent logic of this strategy.

In the concrete Indian political situation of 1934-36, the dominant Congress leadership as also the leadership of the Indian capitalist class felt that the stage of pressure or active struggle was over and the stage of compromise, cooperation, and 'goodwill' had to be ushered in. They had been quietly



working towards a political compromise since the end of 1933, for the civil disobedience movement had definitely petered out by that time.

In the then existing circumstances, this involved the working of constitutional reforms which were finally promulgated in 1935. Gandhi appeared to be against working the reforms but his policy of leaving the legislative councils to those Congressmen who wanted to work in them, while others devoted themselves to the constructive programme virtually amounted to unofficial acceptance of the phase of compromise and cooperation. Moreover, Gandhi and the dominant right-wing leadership of the Congress strained all their nerves to prevent the Congress from adopting a policy of office rejection in the provinces under the Act of 1935 even though they were vehemently denouncing the Act at that time.<sup>43</sup> This is very clearly brought out by the encouragement that Gandhi gave to G. D. Birla to bring about a spirit of mutual trust and 'personal touch' between the rulers and the Congress leadership in general and Gandhi in particular. Again and again Birla, and through him, though virtually silently, Gandhi, assured the British statesmen and officials that even the otherwise condemned reforms could be worked if the 'personal touch' between the two sides was established.<sup>44</sup>

Nehru, on the other hand, argued that if the aim was "a new state" and not merely "a new administration", power could not be gained through stages and with the cooperation of the ruling power,<sup>45</sup> and that the Indian national movement had reached a stage where there should be an uncompromising opposition to and permanent confrontation and conflict with imperialism until it was overthrown.<sup>46</sup> Temporary setbacks should lead not to cooperation or compromise, even a short-term one, with imperialism but to continued hostility to it though necessarily such hostility would be in a low key till the upswing comes once again.<sup>47</sup>

Firstly, said Nehru, the contradiction between imperialism and the Indian people was fundamental and could not therefore be resolved half-way. ". . . between British imperialism and Indian freedom there is no meeting ground and there can be no peace."<sup>48</sup> This meant that even if there was no mass movement there could be no reversion to a constitutional phase when the reforms were worked. Secondly, every movement, national or social, reached sooner or later a stage when it endangered the existing order. The struggle then became perpetual and immediate, unconstitutional and illegal. No scope was left for further compromises. This also happened when "the masses enter politics". Nor was there a middle stage or middle path out of the impasse. "The only alternative to a continuation" of the struggle was "some measure of cooperation with imperialism." But at this stage in Indian and world history, any form of compromise with imperialism "would be a betrayal of the cause". And the answer: "The only way out is to struggle



through to the other side" and to "carry on the struggle for freedom without compromise or going back or faltering".<sup>49</sup> Nehru was also trying to impart the notion of the strategy of seizure of power though through a non-violent mass movement. Real power could not be won gradually through stages, "bit by bit" or by "two annas or four annas". Either imperialism would retain power or the Indians would take possession "of the citadel".<sup>50</sup> Here he was directly posing the strategy of P-V ('V' for victory) to that of P-C-P. He continued to accept in full the non-violent mass movement as the possible method of struggle in India. But for him this method constituted the path of struggle and not of compromise and cooperation with imperialism. He again and again laid emphasis on the strategy of struggle—the question of seizure of power—rather than on the methods of struggle which, he said, were conditioned by the existing political circumstances.<sup>51</sup>

More concretely, he clearly saw during 1935–36 that acceptance of office in the provinces under the Act of 1935 would amount to the reversing of the national movement to the compromise phase. And he campaigned against acceptance of office so vehemently, because *it was a question of struggle between two strategic lines*. The struggle became bitter precisely because Nehru was here challenging the basic strategy of Gandhi and the national movement. And that is also why he was so completely defeated that he was never again to pose a challenge to Gandhi or the dominant Congress leadership.

In his Lucknow Address he took a firm stand on this question which, he said, was of great significance for "behind that issue lay deep questions of principle". "Behind it lies," he said, "somewhat hidden, the question of independence itself and whether we seek revolutionary changes in India or are working for petty reforms under the aegis of British imperialism." Office acceptance "would inevitably mean our cooperation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people". It would mean in practice a surrender before imperialism. For Congressmen it would amount to giving up "the very basis and background of our existence". The Congress not only should not accept office, it could not afford even "to hesitate and waver about it". Acceptance of office by it "will be a pit from which it would be difficult for us to come out". And, lastly, such a step would be fatal to the effort "to cultivate a revolutionary mentality among our people",<sup>52</sup> which was one of his major concerns at this time.

On a wider plane, Nehru opposed giving undue importance to parliamentary activity in general. He wanted to assign work in the legislatures a purely subsidiary role in politics. It was useful only to the extent that it could be used to mobilise the masses for direct mass political action.<sup>53</sup> He

also warned Congressmen against the "real danger" that they might be tempted to tone down their programme and policy "in order to win over" for electoral purposes "the hesitating and compromising groups and individuals".<sup>54</sup> One step that could prevent work in the legislatures from becoming a hindrance to other work was for the Congress and its working committee to directly control it and therefore to abolish the semi-autonomous parliamentary boards.<sup>55</sup>

He recognised however that some form of parliamentary activity was bound to exist and that it must therefore be given a focus around which it could be rallied without compromising with imperialism. Moreover, the mechanism through which power would be grasped and wielded by successful nationalism had also to be laid before the people. Both purposes could be served by the realistic and brilliant slogan of the Constituent Assembly. It was in 1933 that Nehru had first publicly raised the demand that the future constitution of India should be framed by a popularly elected Constituent Assembly. The slogan of the CA constituted a direct challenge to the theory of the working of the existing legislative Councils and therefore also to the strategy of achieving freedom through stages and as a result of political action by the rulers, for the CA could meet only after British domination had ended. It was therefore a slogan that would mobilize the people for the overthrow of imperialism.<sup>56</sup> Nehru reiterated the demand for a Constituent Assembly at Lucknow and for the same reasons. CA would not come, he pointed out, through negotiations with imperialism and as the result of a new act of the British Parliament. It would be an expression of the seizure of power by the Indian people, of "at least a semi-revolutionary situation", that is, of the new strategy of national struggle.<sup>57</sup>

Nehru increasingly pointed to another weakness of the national movement—its essentially middle class and bourgeois character.<sup>58</sup> Even when the political struggle was based on the masses, "the backbone and leadership were always supplied by the middle classes".<sup>59</sup> This produced weakness in several directions. It produced a vague nationalist feeling and ideology of freedom which did not even realise "what form that freedom would take". It also produced a certain idealism, a mysticism, and a sort of religious revivalism.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the middle classes looked in "two directions at the same time". Their members hoped to go up in the world but most of them were being crushed by the colonial economy. Consequently, this leadership looked in "two directions at the same time" and vacillated in periods of struggle. As a propertied group it was open to threats to its property by the Government which, therefore, found it easy "to bring pressure on it and to exhaust its stamina". Middle class domination of the national movement also meant that its policies, ideas and the problems it raised were governed far more

by "this middle class outlook than by a consideration of the needs of the great majority of the population".<sup>41</sup>

The answer lay in a shift in the social base and social character of the movement and its leadership. The middle classes could no longer "claim to represent the masses". The movement must establish "a new link and a new connection". This could only mean the incorporation of the masses, "the active participation of the peasantry and workers".<sup>42</sup> The basic step through which these changes in the class character of the leadership of the national movement as also in its strategy of struggle and social content would be brought about was the collective affiliation of the basic organizations of workers and peasants, trade unions and kisan sabhas, to the Congress.<sup>43</sup> In addition, the Congress should encourage the formation of such kisan sabhas and trade unions and help them carry on day-to-day struggle around their economic demands.<sup>44</sup> It seemed that Nehru was beginning to grope towards assigning the masses a role different from the one assigned by Gandhi. While Gandhi brought the masses into the political movement, he did not encourage or permit them to discuss and develop political activity on their own, leave alone their own leadership. Nehru suggested both. Similarly, for once, Nehru was beginning to come down from the realm of ideas and ideologies to the realm of the methods of political struggle and questions of organization, and thus to meet Gandhi's mild taunt in his letter of 14 September 1933 that "you have emphasised the necessity of a clear statement of the goal" but the fact was "that the clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there if we do not know and utilize the means of achieving it".<sup>45</sup>

Nehru paid a great deal of attention to the question of the integration of the social struggle with the political struggle, thus redefining the very goals of the national movement. He, of course, identified himself fully with the mainstream of nationalism and its chief leader and spokesman, the Indian National Congress.<sup>46</sup> He recognized that nationalism was the strongest force in the country.<sup>47</sup> He also accepted the multi-class character of the Congress as the leader of a national, as apart from a class, movement.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, he criticised the existing dominant tendency to totally subordinate the social struggle to the political struggle, or, much worse, to postpone the social struggle to a later period in the name of national unity and national struggle. This wrong tendency, he believed, was the result of the middle class, bourgeois character of Indian nationalism. Middle class nationalism had tended to ignore the "inherent and fundamental" internal class conflicts and tried "to avoid disturbing the class divisions or the social *status quo*". The reason usually offered was that "the national issue must be settled first".<sup>49</sup> But there could be no genuine struggle which did not incorporate the social struggle

of the masses.<sup>70</sup> In fact, predicted Nehru in October 1933, "political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia".<sup>71</sup> Freedom of India was necessary, he said, precisely because the masses were having to bear the burden of the vested interests of certain classes in India and abroad. "The achievement of freedom thus becomes a question . . . of divesting vested interests." On the other hand, "if an indigenous government took the place of the foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom."<sup>72</sup> Thus, the immediate objective or goal of the freedom struggle had to be the ending of the exploitation of the Indian people. Politically, this meant independence from foreign rule; socially and economically it had to mean "the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests."<sup>73</sup>

In a message to the *Indian Labour Journal* in November 1933, Nehru again emphasised that both the social and the national struggles were basic and that in neither should a compromise be made.<sup>74</sup> Simultaneously, he urged the working class to play its due role in the anti-imperialist struggle. The workers should unite and organise, acquire and develop "the correct ideology" leading to a socialist programme, and act politically in alliance with the national movement with a view to "orient it in favour of the workers".<sup>75</sup> In December 1933, in a speech delivered at the All-India Trade Union Congress, he assured the workers that if they participated fully in the national struggle as well as in their own social struggle, they would help bring not only "political freedom in India but a social freedom also".<sup>76</sup>

The years 1934-35 also witnessed a certain alienation of Nehru from the right-wing leaders of the Congress, which would perhaps have served as a preliminary step to a political struggle against them within the Congress. In his letter of 13 August 1934 to Gandhi, Nehru spoke in an angry tone of the triumph of opportunism in the Congress and put part of the blame on the Working Committee which had "deliberately encouraged vagueness in the definition of our ideals and objectives".<sup>77</sup> He was in particular angry with the Working Committee for passing a resolution on 18 June 1934 that indirectly condemned socialism and socialists for practising "the necessity of class war" and "confiscation of private property". On reading the resolution in jail, he had written in his diary on 20 June 1934: "to hell with the Working Committee—passing pious and fatuous resolutions on subjects it does not understand—or perhaps understands too well."<sup>78</sup> To Gandhi he complained in August that "whether the Working Committee knows anything about the subject or not it is perfectly willing to denounce and excommunicate" the supporters of socialism.<sup>79</sup> The resolution showed "an astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism". "It seemed," he wrote harshly,

"that the overmastering desire of the Committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense". And then he turned the knife with exquisite irony: ". . . it is oft preferred to break some people's hearts rather than touch others' pockets. Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity."<sup>10</sup> In a note written at about the same time as the letter, he even suggested that the resolution was aimed at keeping him and other socialists out of the Congress. Moreover, while "nobody called the Congress socialist", it had now "ceased to be neutral on the subject. It is aggressively anti-socialist and politically it is more backward than it has been for fifteen years." Nor were the members of the Working Committee innocent reactionaries. They had passed the resolution "at the instigation of the Parliamentary Board or its leaders who want to keep on the safe side of the people who have money".<sup>11</sup>

There was a certain growing alienation even from Gandhi. The process had started in jail in 1933. On 4 June, he wrote in his diary: "I am afraid I am drifting further and further away from him mentally, in spite of my strong emotional attachment to him." He contrasted Gandhi with "Lenin and Co." to the former's disadvantage and then wrote: "More and more I feel drawn to their dialectics. more and more I realise the gulf between Bapu and me . . ." Gandhi had accepted "the present social order". What was worse, he "surrounds himself with men who are the pillars and the beneficiaries of this order", and who would without doubt, wrote Nehru with a touch of bitterness, "profit and take advantage of both our movement and of any constitutional changes that may come." On his part, Nehru was quite clear: "I want to break from this lot completely." But he also knew that this was not going to be easy. "There is trouble ahead so far as I am personally concerned. I shall have to fight a stiff battle between rival loyalties." He knew that the choice was not going to be easy to make, and so he wrote: "Perhaps the happiest place for me is the gaol! I have another three months here before I go out, and one can always return."<sup>12</sup>

A few weeks later, Gandhi's efforts at negotiations with the Viceroy exasperated him further. He wrote in his diary on 24 July: "I am getting more and more certain that there can be no further political cooperation between Bapu and me. At least not of the kind that has existed. We had better go our different ways."<sup>13</sup>

Nehru reacted with violent emotion to the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement in April 1934 and even more to the reasons advanced by Gandhi for the step. He wrote in his diary on 12 May 1934: "How can one work with Bapu if he functions in this way and leaves people in the

lurch?"<sup>44</sup> Earlier on 13 April he had written there: "It marks an epoch not only in our freedom struggle but in my personal life. After 15 years I go my way, perhaps a solitary way leading not far."<sup>45</sup> To Gandhi he wrote in half-anguish, half-anger: "I had a sudden and intense feeling, that something broke inside me, a bond that I had valued very greatly had snapped . . . I have always felt a little lonely almost from childhood up . . . But now I felt absolutely alone, left high and dry on a desert island."<sup>46</sup> In an unpublished note, he gave freer reign to his disillusionment and the feeling of a near-break with Gandhi: "there is hardly any common ground between me and Bapu and the others who lead the Congress today. Our objectives are different, our ideals are different, our spiritual outlook is different and our methods are likely to be different . . . I felt with a stab of pain that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped." He complained of Gandhi's "concentration on issues other than the political", of his "personal and self-created entanglements", and of "his desertion (whatever the reasons) of his comrades in the middle of the struggle". After all, there was "such a thing as loyalty to a job undertaken and to one's colleagues in it and it was painful to find that Bapu attached little value to it".<sup>47</sup>

It should also be noted that several chapters of the *Autobiography* written during 1934-35 and published in 1936 were an ideological polemic against the Mahatma, even though couched in a mild, friendly, and even reverential tone. They were perhaps an effort to give Indian nationalism a new ideological orientation.

Thus it seemed by the middle of 1936 that Nehru was setting out to evolve a left political alternative to the Gandhian leadership, an alternative that would challenge the latter in all basic aspects: programme and ideology, social character of the movement and of its leadership, and the strategy of its struggle. He was moreover beginning to emerge as the leader of a broad socialist bloc, which was as yet loose and even incoherent but which was getting formed around his personality. Nor did Nehru confine his new approach to his diary or to discussions in the Working Committee. He wrote extensively for journals and newspapers, both in English and Hindi. His articles were widely translated in other Indian languages and were often published in book or pamphlet form. He issued almost daily press statements. After coming back from Europe in the beginning of 1936, he was busy stumping the country from one end to the other addressing vast audiences and everywhere attracting students and youth to himself. After his election to the Presidentship of the Congress in April 1936 he got further immense opportunities to form the popular mind and to influence political developments.

## III

The new ideological and political approach of Nehru, in particular its distinct articulation in the Presidential Address at the Lucknow session of the Congress, frightened the Indian capitalist class. While the dominant and farsighted pro-Congress leadership of the class set out to take protective measures to contain and confine Nehru, the more conservative and anti-Congress sections decided to launch a frontal attack.

The first shot was fired by A. D. Shroff, Vice-President of the Indian Merchants Chamber of Bombay, on 28 April 1934.<sup>11</sup> Three weeks later, on 18 May, twenty-one leading Bombay businessmen issued what was described by the newspapers as the "Bombay Manifesto Against Jawaharlal Nehru".<sup>12</sup> A series of individual statements by some of the signatories followed—by A. D. Shroff again in the *Times of India* of 20 May, by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in the *Times of India* of 23 May, by Sir Cowasjee Jehangir in the *Times of India* of 29 May and by Sir Homi Mody in the *Times of India* of 11 June 1936. All these statements received full publicity in the press and were often reproduced extensively or in full. The main burden of the critique of the twenty-one was as follows:

Nehru was spreading the idea that private property was immoral and it did not therefore deserve protection by the State. He was thus advocating the "destructive and subversive programme" of doing away with private property and thereby jeopardising "not only the institution of private property but peaceful observance of religion and even personal safety." This charge was clearly borne out by his speech at Lucknow in which he had advocated socialism which had been defined as the ending of private property and the profit system, and had illustrated his conception of socialism by describing what was happening in the Soviet Union as the inauguration of "the new civilization." He had thus argued for "the total destruction of the existing social and economic structure." Such ideas were particularly dangerous because "in the present conditions and widespread economic misery of the country, they are likely to find ready, though unthinking reception." The masses were likely to be misled by doctrines leading to "disorders in course of time." The capitalists had hitherto played a considerable part in the development of the national movement, but Nehru's activities were likely to divide the country and thus to impede the achievement of self-government.<sup>13</sup>

The individual critics were worried by Nehru's abandonment of the contemporary Fabian, Labour Party, and Social Democratic definitions of socialism in favour of the clear-cut Marxist definition. As Chimanlal Setalvad put it: "though he calls his creed socialism, it is really Communism and



Bolshevism of the Russian type." Certainly, most people in India, said Chimanlal, would "welcome socialism, as it is understood and practised in some of the countries in Western Europe." In fact, many of the critics of Nehru's propaganda would support socialism if it meant "the more equitable distribution of profits between labour and capital, the securing of a reasonable minimum standard of living for all and even, under circumstances and conditions, the nationalisation of some key industries."<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir asserted that Nehru was "a wholehearted communist" and was throwing "a smoke-screen over his propaganda by calling it Socialism". He was, in fact, "the leader of the Communistic School of thought of India". The real issue in the debate, he said, was "whether the Soviet form of Government is the best for India."<sup>92</sup> And Sir Homi Mody warned: "His meaning is clear and the programme is fairly definite. Firstly, political independence, and then a Socialist State, in which vested interests, property rights and the motives of profit will have no place at all. Let those whose minds are running in the direction of intermediate stages and pleasant halting places not forget that they are really buying a through ticket to Moscow."<sup>93</sup> A. D. Shroff criticised him for promoting "class hatred" and "class war" and asked the Congress to remember that the primary political task of the movement being to "obtain our political freedom", it should not disturb "that complete unity" which was needed to win concessions from the British. The type of pronouncements made by Nehru at Lucknow could also harm the country's interests in another manner. They might result "in checking industrial enterprise and in encouraging flight of capital from India."<sup>94</sup> Sir Homi Mody held up the mirror of reality to Nehru in one other aspect. There existed, he pointed out, a big contradiction between Nehru's ideology and definition of socialism and his abhorrence of violence and commitment to peaceful, non-violent methods. Nehru was being "credulous" when he suggested that his ideas could be implemented "without a violent and catastrophic upheaval." "In what age and in which country," he asked, "such a fundamental change in the basis of society had been brought about by a peaceful and bloodless revolution?"<sup>95</sup>

Nehru's ideas had of course been known for some time: and had been generally ignored. But that even the high office of the Presidentship of the Congress would fail to tone him down was rather unexpected.<sup>96</sup> Much worse, they were no longer the opinions of a mere individual but of the President of the most powerful organisation in the country. There was every likelihood that he would use his position and the prestige of his high office to propagate his ideas on a much larger scale, to "push the Congress to the left", to undermine the long established hegemony of the bourgeois ideology over the national movement, and in general to strengthen the left alternative to



Gandhi." The only solace so far was that the majority in the Congress did not support him, but this situation might not last long. "The socialist section of the Congress was gaining ground," warned Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, "and it may be that with the powerful advocacy of Pandit, they will capture the Congress much sooner than people believe."<sup>99</sup>

These open and stringent critics were however confined to Bombay and represented mostly the traditionally pro-Liberal or loyalist and anti-Congress section of the capitalist class. Some of them objected not only to Nehru's radicalism but also to nationalist militancy in the form of non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements.<sup>100</sup> Nehru got a biographical analysis of the twenty-one signatories to be made and found that most of them were either Liberals or loyalists, linked with the House of Tatas or with foreign capital, or were nonentities.<sup>100</sup> Moreover they were hardly given any support by the other capitalists in the rest of the country or even in Bombay. Many, on the other hand, opposed them, as is brought out in Section IV below. Nehru made full use of both these facts in his running polemic against the Bombay twenty-one.

The odd man out among the twenty-one was Purshotamdas Thakurdas whose growing anxiety had made him sign the manifesto but who was, as we shall see in the next section, in wider agreement with the larger and more sober section of the capitalist class.

#### IV

The more farsighted and pro-Congress of the Indian capitalists were perhaps no less worried by Nehru. But they did not approach the task of setting him right or reducing his influence in anger. Their approach is very clearly brought out in letters exchanged during April to June 1936 between G. D. Birla, Purshotamdas Thakurdas, and Walchand Hirachand.<sup>101</sup> This approach was laid down in the main by G. D. Birla, the brilliant political leader and mentor of the Indian capitalist class whose political acumen often bordered on that of a genius; but it is to be kept in view that the rest of the class tended to follow his lead.

Birla's and Purshotamdas Thakurdas's approach to the problem of Nehru was a multi-pronged one.

Firstly, they were not immediately worried much by the general ideological bent of Nehru or by his propaganda in favour of socialism. Their chief anxiety was the challenge that Nehru posed to the working of the 1935 Act by his intransigent stance against acceptance of office. The capitalists, on the other hand, were keen to digest the fruits of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-33 and the resulting constitutional negotiations and, consequently to

cooperate with the Government. For the last two years Birla had been working hard behind the scenes both in India and England to bring about amity between the British officials and the Congress leadership.<sup>102</sup> As President of the Congress, Nehru was in a position to bring all this effort to naught and to frustrate the full working of the P-C-P strategy.<sup>103</sup> Refusal to accept office would lead to a continuous state of confrontation with imperialism and would thus tend to shift the basic strategy of nationalism from the non-revolutionary strategy of P-C-P to the revolutionary one of P-V. This was, therefore, the crucial issue, the fulcrum-point of the Indian politics of the period, on which Nehru must be held. All else was just then peripheral and could wait to be tackled later.<sup>104</sup>

Internal evidence of Sir Purshotamdas's letter of 18 April and Birla's of 20 April indicates that Gandhi had assured Birla that he would prevent Nehru from committing the Congress to rejection of office at Lucknow. Thus, referring to the proceedings of the Lucknow session, Sir Purshotamdas asked Birla "whether you think that Mahatma's and your expectations have been fulfilled"; and Birla replied that he was "perfectly satisfied with what has taken place." "Mahatmaji kept his promise", he asserted, "and without his uttering a word, he saw that *no new commitments were made*."<sup>105</sup> The last obviously referred to office acceptance or rejection and perhaps to the question of direct affiliation of the trade unions and kisan sabhas to the Congress. Birla's satisfaction was fully justified, for once the Congress postponed the decision on acceptance of office and refused to commit itself to office rejection, the battle was half-won by the ministerialists.<sup>106</sup> The crucial question in the situation was to avoid any further confrontation with imperialism, and even Nehru had conceded the point. He had "confessed in his speech . . . that there was no chance of any direct action in the near future."<sup>107</sup>

An allied problem was that of the control of the Congress organization and the party machine. The presidentship was after all only one position in the hierarchy. Here also there was ground for satisfaction. Ten out of the fourteen members of the new Working Committee were right-wingers, or, as Birla put it, Nehru's Working Committee contained "an overwhelming majority of 'Mahatmaji's Group'." Particularly gratifying to Birla was the inclusion of Rajaji in the new Working Committee. The control of the new legislatures would also be crucial. With the right type of men there, acceptance of office would not be far off. In this respect too the picture was bright: "the election which will take place will be controlled by Vallabhbhai group."<sup>108</sup>

Birla was, therefore, convinced that political developments were "moving in the right direction." If only lord Linlithgow handled the situation

properly, he concluded, "there is every likelihood of the Congressmen coming into office."<sup>109</sup> Purshotamdas Thakurdas agreed with this cheerful analysis.<sup>110</sup>

Secondly, Birla was quite clear that the battle against the socialist tendency could not be joined frontally and certainly not by the capitalists themselves. To do so was to fight on the wrong ground and thus to invite defeat; and those who did so were not friends but enemies of their class. Consequently, he was very angry with the approach of the signatories to the Bombay Manifesto against Nehru. In a letter to Walchand Hirachand, dated 26 May 1936,<sup>111</sup> he questioned the wisdom of his signing the manifesto and asserted that this act had been "instrumental in creating further opposition to capitalism." He upbraided Walchand Hirachand: "You have rendered no service to your castemen."<sup>112</sup> In fact, "your manifesto has done positive harm to the capitalist system." Birla's strong feelings on the subject were expressed in a more restrained but equally firm manner when he wrote to Purshotamdas Thakurdas, his senior in age and standing. He had been "painfully surprised to see your name in the crowd." The manifesto was "liable to be seriously misinterpreted." "Evidently, you did not consider its contents carefully," he gently chided his capitalist elder, "a thing which is against your habit. The manifesto has given impetus to the forces working against capitalism—another result which you did not intend."<sup>113</sup> In other words, Purshotamdas Thakurdas had strayed from the path of a farsighted leader.

Birla believed that to wage a successful struggle against the left in the Congress, the correct course was to fight through others. This meant strengthening the right-wing leaders in the Congress. "We all are against socialism", he told Walchand Hirachand, but the question was who had credentials to say so in public. Certainly the men of property did not. "It looks very crude for a man with property to say that he is opposed to expropriation in the wider interests of the country." After all, any man of property was bound to oppose expropriation. True, expropriation was against the higher interests of society, "but the question is, 'Are you or myself a fit person to talk?'" Who were then 'fit persons to talk'? "Let those who have given up property," said Birla, "say what you want to say." The task of the capitalists was "to strengthen" the hands of such persons. By doing so "we can help everyone". But precisely in this respect "we businessmen are so short sighted", for "even people like Vallabhbhai and Bhulabhai who are fighting against socialism are not being helped."<sup>114</sup> Obviously, though Birla named only Sardar Patel and Bhulabhai Desai, he had Gandhi, Rajaji, Rajendra Prasad, whom he had named in his letter of 20 April, and other right-wing leaders of the Congress in mind as men to be helped to fight against expropriation of private property. Once again Purshotamdas Thakurdas expressed agreement with Birla's advice.<sup>115</sup> Nor did the advice fall on empty ears. Walchand Hira-

chand promptly gave one lakh rupees to meet the costs of the Faizpur session of the Congress presided over by Jawaharlal. And, of course, Birla practised what he preached. For years he had been financing the Congress and Gandhi's innumerable organizations and giving financial help to Rajendra Prasad and other leaders.<sup>116</sup>

Birla also noted that the 'Mahatma's men' had delivered the goods at Lucknow. "Rajendra Babu spoke very strongly and some people attacked Jawaharlal's ideology openly." Nehru had been throughout in a small minority, and, what is more, "Jawaharlal's speech in a way was thrown into the waste paper basket because all the resolutions that were passed were against the spirit of his speech."<sup>117</sup> Birla was referring to the fact that both of Nehru's crucial proposals for office rejection and collective affiliation of the workers' and peasants' organizations with the Congress were defeated. Birla's strategy also bore rich fruits in the coming months. Through a series of carefully managed organizational crises, the Congress right-wing, known popularly as the 'high command', aided by Gandhi, curbed, disciplined, and tamed the fire-eating Nehru of the Lucknow Session. Unfortunately, we cannot trace this fascinating process here which Nehru indirectly helped by fighting, bowing down, and sulking in turn and by fighting the right-wing on questions of manners and styles of functioning rather than on policies.<sup>118</sup>

The third prong of Birla's approach to Nehru lay in establishing a correct understanding of the man. Nehru was not to be treated as an inveterate enemy. He was to be properly understood and moulded. Answering Purshotamdas Thakurdas's query in his letter of 18 April whether Gandhi would be able to keep the extremist Nehru under his control, Birla praised Jawaharlal for fully realising his position of minority in the party and not taking advantage of his powers as the President.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, he complained later that the wording of the Bombay manifesto had not done "full justice to Jawaharlal."<sup>120</sup> While the shortsighted had only heard the ringing tones of Nehru's address at Lucknow, Birla shrewdly noted that he had not been willing to fight the right wing at Lucknow. "Jawaharlalji seems to be like a typical English democrat who takes defeat in a sporting spirit." Nor had he, noted Birla appreciatively, caused a split by resigning. Birla also recognised Nehru's basic weakness that his political actions were much more sober and 'realistic' than his ideological flights, that, in other words, there was a wide gap between his theory and practice. "He seems to be out for giving expression to his ideology, but he realises that action is impossible and so does not press for it."<sup>121</sup> This understanding and appreciation of Nehru—Birla seemed to have imbibed from Gandhi, for the latter wrote to Agatha Harrison in Britain in the same vein on 30 April 1936:

His address is a confession of his faith. You see from the formation of his 'cabinet' that he has chosen a majority of those who represent the traditional view i.e. from 1920 . . . But though Jawaharlal is extreme in his presentation of his methods, he is sober in action. So far as I know him, he will not precipitate a conflict. Nor will he shirk it, if it is forced on him . . . My own feeling is that Jawaharlal will accept the decisions of the majority of his colleagues.<sup>122</sup>

Once again, Purshotamdas Thakurdas agreed with Birla's overall estimate of Nehru. "I never had any doubt about the bona fide of J," he wrote, "in fact, I put them very high indeed." He, however, felt, extending the line of Birla's reasoning further, "that a good deal of nursing will have to be done to keep J on the right rails all through."<sup>123</sup>

Other sections of the Indian capitalist class agreed with this third-prong of the Birla-Thakurdas approach, and they immediately set out to 'nurse' Nehru. Immediately after the attack of the twenty-one was published, a host of capitalist associations of Bombay rose up to greet him, to present him addresses, to express their solidarity with him, and thus to dissociate the class as a whole from the manifesto against him. Many of them even defended his preoccupation with the cause of the workers and peasants.

On 18 May 1936, the merchants and brokers of the Bombay Bullion Exchange presented Nehru a purse of Rs. 1,501, eulogized his services to the country and expressed joy at the fact that "he had been devoting a good deal of his time to work in connection with the uplift of the peasants and workers of India."<sup>124</sup> On 19 May, an address was presented to Nehru by five merchants' associations of Bombay—The Marwari Chamber of Commerce, the Hindustan Native Merchants' Association, the Bombay Cotton Brokers' Association, the Marwari and the Bombay Grain and Seeds Brokers' Association.<sup>125</sup> On May 20, a meeting was convened by thirteen mercantile bodies at Mandavi, Bombay, including the Grain Merchants' Association, the Sugar Merchants' Association, the Seed Merchants' Association, and the Bombay Grain Dealers' Association. Presiding over the meeting, Velji Lukhamsay Nappoo said: "The merchants might not agree with all the Socialistic views of Pandit Nehru, but whatever views he would like to place before them, the merchants would respectfully consider them."<sup>126</sup> On the same day the Country Made Fancy and Grey Cotton Piecegoods Merchants' Association presented Nehru an address eulogizing his "unceasing efforts for the betterment of the conditions of the teeming millions of workers, labourers and peasants of the Country." In his speech of welcome, the President of the Association, Gordhandas Goculdas Morarji said:

. . . even though your theories of socialism might have stirred a

section of the commercial community, we are of the opinion that our advancement is inter-dependent upon the advancement of the masses . . . It is true that certain extreme views regarding Marxism or Communism may not be acceptable to the mercantile community, but looking to the present condition of India and her teeming millions . . . it cannot be denied that the reconstruction of the present form of society is needed.<sup>127</sup>

The brokers of the Shri Mahajan Sabha also presented Nehru with an address on 20 May.<sup>128</sup> On 22 May, fifteen leading businessmen of Bombay who were all members of the Committee of the Indian Merchants Chamber met Nehru to affirm their continued support to the Congress and to convince him that the mercantile community as a whole did not support the manifesto. They also asked him "to explain what he meant by socialism, when it would be achieved and whether the merchants with their limitations could give their quota in the movement of socialism."<sup>129</sup>

It has also to be noted that Purshotamdas Thakurdas probably believed that giving a sharp blow to a person to bring him to his senses was a part of the tactics of nursing him, for nursing includes the administration of a bitter dose when necessary. Thus, while agreeing with Birla's sharp critique of the manifesto, he ascribed his own signatures on it to a desire to warn Jawaharlal against "the somewhat aggressive manner" in which he "was preaching socialism verging on communism."<sup>130</sup>

## V

And what of Nehru's response? The Lucknow Address was both the high watermark and the swan song of his radicalism.<sup>131</sup> Increasingly his time was taken up by the management of Congress affairs, and imperceptibly he went back to the role of a radical nationalist. He retained some of his fire. Immediately after 18 May 1936 he hit back hard at his critics. Some of the later articles remind one of the Nehru of 1933-36. He always maintained his courage and manliness. But the gradual abandonment of all the ground gained in the early 1930's continued. He gave up the fight to change the basic strategy of the Indian struggle for freedom and was absorbed by the P-C-P pattern. He was no longer to try to arouse the self-activity of the masses; he began to operate within the ambit of the Gandhian notion of mass participation under strict control of the middle-class leadership. From now on the chief role of the masses was to listen to his speeches. In ideology, not Marxism but a mild form of Fabianism became the norm, though once in a while there came flashes of his old Marxism. He also abandoned the strategy of unifying the two struggles, the political and the social. The second

remained formally joined to the first but increasingly receded to the horizon. Earlier he had repeatedly upbraided the Indian socialists and communists for talking tall and doing nothing. Now he openly accepted that the social struggle would remain a verbal ideal and the national struggle alone belonged to the realm of political practice.

Why did all this happen? It is always difficult to explain changes in the life history of an individual. Many factors, forces, and events went into the making of the post-Lucknow Nehru. There were inherent weaknesses in Nehru's Marxism and socialist commitment and his conception of the revolutionary road to independence which we have not examined in the first two sections of this paper since our object was not to evaluate him as a socialist thinker or a revolutionary nationalist but to bring out those facets of his politics and ideology which worried and frightened the capitalist class. Some of these weaknesses come readily to mind: his failure to build a political base of his own and lack of active work among or even contact with workers and peasants after 1936; his attachment and subservience to Gandhi which was strengthened by his fear of being 'lonely' or isolated politically; his refusal to form a socialist group or join hands with existing ones or organise in any form radical activity outside the Congress framework; the weakness of the left outside the Congress;<sup>122</sup> his utter neglect of organization even within the Congress. Psychologically, his leftism of 1933-36 was in part the product of political frustration arising out of the defeat and demoralization of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The excitement of elections, the whirlwind country-wide campaigns, the guidance of the party and Congress ministries, the involvement with China and Spain and the coming war all gave him a psychological boost and lifted him from the slough of depression and 'desolation' as also leftist preoccupations. In other words, G. D. Birla and other capitalists *had perhaps evaluated him as well as he himself had been able to do in his Autobiography.*<sup>123</sup>

At the same time, there is no doubt that the capitalist strategy of nursing him, opposing him, and, above all, of supporting the right-wing in the Congress also played an important role in first containing him and then moulding him so that by 1947 the capitalist class was ready to accept him as the Prime Minister of independent India and to cooperate with him in the task of building up its economy along the capitalist path.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>
1. Jawaharlal Nehru:	(i) <i>Recent Essays and Writings</i> ; Allahabad, 1934.	REW



# NEHRU AND THE CAPITALIST CLASS : 1936

Author	Title	Abbreviation
	(ii) <i>Glimpses of World History</i> , Allahabad, 1934, Vols. I & II	<i>Glimpses</i>
	(iii) <i>An Autobiography</i> , first published in 1936, New Delhi, 1962 reprint.	<i>Autobiography</i>
	(iv) <i>India and the World</i> , London, 1936.	<i>IW</i>
	(v) <i>A Bunch of Old Letters</i> , Bombay, 1958.	<i>BOL</i>
	(vi) <i>Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru</i> , General Ed., S. Gopal, New Delhi, Vol. V, 1973, Vol. V, 1974.	<i>SW</i>
2. Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.		<i>Nehru Papers</i>
3. Purshotamdas Thakurdas Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.		<i>PT Papers</i>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> His public statements from late 1933 to early 1936 have to be seen in continuation since he was in jail for most of 1934-35.

<sup>2</sup> He wrote to Gandhi on 13 August, 1934: "But whether I function inside or outside the legislature I function as a revolutionary, meaning thereby a person working for the fundamental, and revolutionary changes, political and social, for I am convinced that no other changes can bring peace or satisfaction to India and the world." *BOL*, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup> S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—a Biography*, Vol. I, Chapter VII, forthcoming, 1975.

<sup>4</sup> A certain looseness and mildness in expression which appeared to his left-wing critics as an effort to "avoid the implication" of his statements was ascribed by Nehru in a letter to a young Marxist (10 Nov. 1933) as due to the effort to reach "an audience which is not used to these ideas and to technical terms," to the desire "to carry the audience and not merely to make a brave show," and to avoid isolation from the Congress thus "leaving the organisation which has so much influence over people's minds in India to other people with a reactionary outlook." *SW*, Vol. VI, pp. 117-18.

<sup>5</sup> His new ideas and politics were given first public expression in an interview to the *Pioneer* on 31st August 1933. See *SW*, Vol. V, pp. 506ff.

<sup>6</sup> *IW*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>7</sup> See S. Gopal, Chapter VIII.

<sup>8</sup> *REW*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24. From earlier declaration on the same lines, see interview to the *Pioneer*, 31 August 1933, *SW*, Vol. V, p. 508.

<sup>10</sup> *REW*, p. 139. Also see p. 136.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 126.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126. Also see p. 124.

<sup>13</sup> *IW*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>14</sup> Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>15</sup> *REW*, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> *IW*, p. 83. Also see *Autobiography*, p. 543. *Glimpses*, I, p. 575, II, p. 852.

<sup>17</sup> "Letter to Lord Lothian" 17 January 1936, in *BOL*, p. 141. Also published in May 1936 in *IW* as "a Letter to an Englishman." Emphasis added.



- <sup>18</sup> *SW*, V, p. 538. Also see *ibid.*, p. 541; *Glimpses*, II, p. 857.
- <sup>19</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 523.
- <sup>20</sup> Letter to Lord Lothian, *BOL*, p. 143.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-43.
- <sup>22</sup> *REW*, pp. 30-31. Earlier, on 10 October 1932, he had written in a letter to Indira: "It took a long time for people to discover that mere equality before the law and the possession of a vote do not ensure real equality or liberty or happiness, and that those in power have other ways of exploiting them still." *Glimpses*, I, p. 575.
- <sup>23</sup> *SW*, V, p. 460.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 508.
- <sup>25</sup> *REW*, pp. 33-35.
- <sup>26</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 544.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 551-52.
- <sup>28</sup> For example, *SW*, V, pp. 479, 489, 521; *REW*, pp. 18, 40; *SW*, VI, pp. 110, 111; Lucknow Address, *IW*, p. 79.
- <sup>29</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 504.
- <sup>30</sup> *REW*, p. 135. Also see *ibid.*, pp. 30, 123; Letter to Lord Lothian, *BOL*, p. 140; *SW*, V, p. 541; *Glimpses*, II, p. 853.
- <sup>31</sup> Report in *Times of India*, 18 May 1936, p. 11.
- <sup>32</sup> Report in *Times of India*, 19 May 1936, p. 14. Also see his entirely friendly and almost a disciple-like treatment of Marxism in his letter no. 134 to Indira on 16 February 1933, though he does not explicitly affirm himself as a Marxist. *Glimpses*, II, pp. 851ff.
- <sup>33</sup> *REW*, pp. 10-16.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. Also see Lucknow Address, *IW*, p. 69.
- <sup>35</sup> Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 67, 69, 83, 101; and Foreword to M. R. Masani's book on the Soviet Union, 25 February 1936, *Nehru Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; *REW*, p. 123.
- <sup>36</sup> Foreword to Masani's book, *op. cit.*
- <sup>37</sup> *IW*, p. 83.
- <sup>38</sup> Foreword to Masani's book, *op. cit.*
- <sup>39</sup> *IW*, p. 83.
- <sup>40</sup> *REW*, pp. 18-19.
- <sup>41</sup> *IW*, pp. 70, 81. Earlier, in September 1933, he had written to Gandhi: "Both on the narrower ground of our own interests and the wider ground of international welfare and human progress we must, I feel, range ourselves with the progressive forces of the world." Letter dated 13 September, 1936 in D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, New Delhi, 1969 reprint, Vol. III, p. 306.
- <sup>42</sup> *The Indian Capitalist Class and British Imperialism*, in R. S. Sharma (ed.), *Indian Society: Historical Probing*, New Delhi, 1974; (The essay has however been mangled and distorted in the Press); and *Elements of Change and Continuity in the Early Nationalist Activity*, read at the Muzaffarpur session of the Indian History Congress.
- <sup>43</sup> See below.
- <sup>44</sup> G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, Calcutta, 1953, Chapters XI-XVIII.
- <sup>45</sup> *Autobiography*.
- <sup>46</sup> *SW*, VI, pp. 21, 79, 94, 102-03. He was moving towards this approach since 1932: see *SW*, V, p. 386.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 74.
- <sup>48</sup> *REW*, p. 22.
- <sup>49</sup> *REW*, pp. 21, 38-40, 141-42; *SW*, V, pp. 532-36; *SW*, VI, pp. 87-88. Nehru gave a wider sweep to this statement in a speech at Calcutta on 18 Jan. 1934 for which he was jailed for two more years. Repeating the arguments given above, he asserted that hunger being the propeller of Indian nationalism, "even if leaders and organizations weaken, compromise and betray, this economic urge remains and will continue to push the masses on . . ." See *SW*, VI, pp. 101-05.
- <sup>50</sup> *SW*, VI, p. 104.
- <sup>51</sup> See, for example, *SW*, V, pp. 532-37, 544.
- <sup>52</sup> *IW*, pp. 90-5. Replying those who argued that popularly elected ministries would provide some relief to the people and protect them from repression, Nehru pointed out that while they had little power and their capacity to give relief was marginal, the Congress ministries "would have to share responsibility for the administration with the apparatus imperialism, for the deficit budgets, for the suppression of labour and the peasantry." "It is always dangerous," he

pointed out, "to assume responsibility without power." *Ibid.*, p. 91. To those who said that more voters would vote for the Congress if they knew that it would form ministries, he replied: "That might happen if we deluded them with false promises of what we might do for them within the Act, but a quick nemesis would follow our failure to give effect to these promises, and failure would be inevitable if the promises were worthwhile." *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>33</sup> *IW*, p. 89.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>36</sup> *REW*, pp. 70-72.

<sup>37</sup> *IW*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>38</sup> *REW*, pp. 3-4; *BOL*, p. 148.

<sup>39</sup> Lucknow Address, *IW*, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> *REW*, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-81. Also see *Ibid.*, p. 95; and *SW*, VI, p. 101.

<sup>43</sup> Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 101-04.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>45</sup> D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 309.

<sup>46</sup> *REW*, p. 42; *SW*, VI, pp. 17-18, 118, 126.

<sup>47</sup> *REW*, pp. 128-29.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 131; Lucknow Address, *IW*, p. 84.

<sup>49</sup> *REW*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Also see Letter to Lord Lothian, *BOL*, p. 144.

<sup>52</sup> *REW*, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21. Similarly, Nehru told Gandhi in 1933 that "the problem of achieving freedom becomes one of revising vested interests in favour of the masses. To the extent this is done, to that extent only will freedom come." Letter dated 13 September 1933, Tendulkar, Vol. III, p. 305.

<sup>54</sup> *REW*, p. 127.

<sup>55</sup> *SW*, V, pp. 546-47.

<sup>56</sup> *REW*, pp. 131-32.

<sup>57</sup> *BOL*, p. 115.

<sup>58</sup> *SW*, VI, p. 259. Emphasis added.

<sup>59</sup> *BOL*, p. 115. In his Autobiography, Nehru again commented on the subject and pointed out that "Confiscation, persistent and continual, is the basis of the existing system, and it is to put an end to this that social changes are proposed. There is the daily confiscation of part of the labour product of the worker; a peasant's holding is ultimately confiscated by raising his rent or revenue to such an extent that he cannot pay it." p. 587.

<sup>60</sup> *BOL*, p. 116. Nehru did not at the time know that Gandhi had drafted the Working Committee resolution.

<sup>61</sup> Note on "Congress Leaders and their policy," Aug. 1934, *Nehru Papers*. Also in *SW*, VI, pp. 270-73.

<sup>62</sup> *SW*, V, pp. 478-79. The unconscious drift of his mind is revealed by a sudden reference to M. N. Roy in the same entry in the Diary: "I think often of M. N. Roy. The poor chap is so lonely in the world with hardly any one to give a thought to him." *Ibid.*, p. 479.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>64</sup> *SW*, VI, p. 251.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>66</sup> *BOL*, p. 113.

<sup>67</sup> Note of August 1934, *Nehru Papers*. Also *SW*, VI, pp. 271-73. Also see *Autobiography*, pp. 505-08. Alienation from Gandhi was, of course, a mere tendency which had its ups and downs (for example, see *SW*, V, pp. 532, 537-38) and in the end, after 1936, loyalty to Gandhi wore out.

<sup>68</sup> File No. 130, *Nehru Papers*, Part II.

<sup>69</sup> The entire manifesto is published in the *Tribune* of 20 May, 1936. The signatories included Sir Naoroji Saklatwala, Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Pheroz Sethna, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, Sir Shapurji Billimoria, Sir Homi Mody, Walchand Hirachand, V. N. Chandavarkar, Mathuradas Vessanji, Chunilal B. Mehta, and K. R. P. Shroff.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Times of India*, 23 May 1936.

<sup>72</sup> *Times of India*, 29 May 1936.

- <sup>92</sup> *Times of India*, 11 June 1936.
- <sup>93</sup> File No. 130, *Nehru Papers*, Part II.
- <sup>94</sup> *Times of India*, 11 June 1936. Also see *Tribune*, 13 June 1936.
- <sup>95</sup> See, for example, Cowasjee Jehangir's statement, *Times of India*, 29 May 1936.
- <sup>96</sup> See the statements of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, Sir Homi Mody, and A. D. Shroff cited above.
- <sup>97</sup> *Times of India*, 23 May 1936. Also see A. D. Shroff, File No. 130, *Nehru Papers*, Part II.
- <sup>98</sup> See, for example, A. D. Shroff's and Cowasjee Jehangir's statements cited above.
- <sup>99</sup> File No. 130, *Nehru Papers*, Part II: The analysis showed that only two of the signatories represented the Indian capitalist class—Purshotamdas Thakurdas and Walchand Hirachand. The note pointed out that the latter was notorious for changing opinions and politics while the former had been repudiated by the Indian mercantile community when he had agreed to attend the Third Round Table Conference.
- <sup>100</sup> File No. 177/1936-43, *PT Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.
- <sup>101</sup> G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, pp. 142-215.
- <sup>102</sup> For details of the capitalists' political strategy during this period, see Bipan Chandra, "The Indian Capitalist Class and British Imperialism", *op. cit.*, pp. 404-09.
- <sup>103</sup> It was on this ground that Birla appealed to the British statesmen to give concessions to the Congress right-wing. See *ibid.*, 401; and G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, pp. 193-95, 214. Referring to Birla's negotiation in Britain and India, Sir Purshotamdas wrote to Birla on 23 April 1936: "I can't help feeling that the time is on now when you can crystallise your splendid work in London last year." File No. 177/1936-43, *PT Papers*.
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, Emphasis in the original.
- <sup>105</sup> See S. Gopal, *op. cit.*, Chapter XIII.
- <sup>106</sup> Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, File No. 177/1936-43, *PT Papers*.
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* The candidates were to be selected by a Parliamentary Board presided over by Sardar Patel. Moreover Sardar Patel took upon himself the task of collecting election funds. See Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, pp. 427, 430.
- <sup>108</sup> Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, *op. cit.*
- <sup>109</sup> PT to Birla, 23 April 1936, *op. cit.*
- <sup>110</sup> File No. 177/1936-43, *PT Papers*.
- <sup>111</sup> This passage reveals a remarkable sense of class-consciousness. Birla sees fellow capitalists as fellow caste-men, thus emphasising the extent of class cohesion and solidarity.
- <sup>112</sup> Birla to PT, 1 June 1936, File No. 177/1936-43, *PT Papers*. Birla also wrote: "You are such a cautious man that you never take any step without careful consideration and therefore I was rather surprised that you should have put your name to a document..."
- <sup>113</sup> PT to Birla, 29 May 1936, File No. 177/1936-43, *PT Papers*.
- <sup>114</sup> G. D. Khanolkar, *Walchand Hirachand* (Bombay, 1969), p. 342.
- <sup>115</sup> See G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*.
- <sup>116</sup> Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, *op. cit.* The majority against Nehru's views was contributed largely by delegates from Gujarat, Bihar, Tamilnadu and Andhra, that is, mostly by provinces controlled by Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, and Rajaji. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1936, p. 284.
- <sup>117</sup> But see Gopal, *op. cit.*, Chapter XIII.
- <sup>118</sup> Birla to PT, 20 April, 1936, *op. cit.*
- <sup>119</sup> Birla to PT, 1 June 1936, *op. cit.*
- <sup>120</sup> Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, *op. cit.*
- <sup>121</sup> Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 30 April 1936, *BOL*, pp. 175-76.
- <sup>122</sup> PT to Birla, 23 April 1936, *op. cit.*
- <sup>123</sup> *Times of India*, 20 May 1936.
- <sup>124</sup> *The Tribune*, 20 May 1936.
- <sup>125</sup> *Times of India*, 22 May 1936.
- <sup>126</sup> File No. 130, *Nehru Papers*, Part II.
- <sup>127</sup> *Times of India*, 22 May 1936.
- <sup>128</sup> *The Tribune*, 23 May 1936, *Times of India*, 23 May 1936.
- <sup>129</sup> PT to Birla, 29 May 1936, *op. cit.*
- <sup>130</sup> See S. Gopal, *op. cit.*, Chapter XIII.
- <sup>131</sup> This is a very important aspect, though we cannot go into it here. Nehru was incapable of building a socialist or communist party on his own, but he might have been able to serve as the popular head of a left front led by a revolutionary Marxist Party. But the Communist Party of India was too weak to play such an independent political role, and Nehru could not do so acting on his own.

# Sri Aurobindo and the Marxist on Civilisation and Culture

D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA

## I

### *Conceptual Preliminaries*

THE twin concepts of civilisation and culture are often used but not easy to define. One way of understanding and explicating these two concepts is to trace their etymological meanings. Civilisation is a state of civil society. And a civil society is marked by various institutions, means and mechanisms of life and living. Human institutions are of various kinds, social, political and economic. It is true that there is no hard and fast line of distinction between different kinds of institutions. A study in depth of facts and fictions or beliefs inter-relating different institutions and sustaining them as integral parts of a whole dynamic complex makes us aware of what culture really is. The metaphor of cultivation or agriculture is not quite irrelevant to a preliminary understanding of the nature of culture. Unless we scratch the surface of our institutions and dig deep into the sources and forces which support them, we do not know what really are they and cannot follow adequately their changing patterns of functioning, survival and modification.

Another way of explicating of what civilisation is is to contrast it from a state of society often critically characterised as barbarism. Civilisation and barbarism are relative terms. So the line of distinction is drawn between the two changes from age to age. Peoples of settled civilisation generally develop superior complexity and supercilious attitude towards the nomadic peoples. For example, the Hellenic and Roman people had an unmitigated contempt for the Barbarians, Goths and Vandals. But it is a well-known fact that in running warfare the settled peoples of "superior" civilisation are no match for their nomadic counterparts. Attila the Hun, Chengis Khan and Taimur proved this truth repeatedly and very convincingly. In respect of war, an important institution of civilisation, the so-called Barbaric peoples demon-

strated time and again their superiority over the so-called more civilised peoples equipped with better technology. It is not necessarily the material means and mechanisms, including technology, of civilisation which impart strength to a group of people. The relatively less perceptible aspect of human living, art, science and other intellectual achievements collectively designated as culture, is also a factor to reckon with.

Different thinkers have used different principles for identification and classification of culture. Some have tried to correlate culture with religious spirit. Religion is their classificatory principle. Some others have been maintaining that the character of culture is determined by that of class and the latter in turn by the economic mode of production. There were still others to defend the view that culture is to be classified following some psychological principles. Whether "religious spirit" and "psychological principles" are themselves autonomous or derivative is itself a matter of controversy between thinkers of different persuasions. Sri Aurobindo follows psychological principles in characterising and classifying cultures. Material forms of civilisation, modes of production, types of Government and administration and the like, are, according to him, determined from within by the dominant psychological disposition of the age. In *The Human Cycle* he traces the development of the human mind in general and its changing character-traits, correlating them with appropriate institutional expressions. Means and mechanisms of civilisation and forms of culture are on ultimate analysis found to be cast in the moulds of human psychology. The inner history of the development of human mind supporting and sustaining different types of civilisation and culture is more helpful than anything else in explaining external forms of our life and living.

Sri Aurobindo's concept of culture is essentially spiritual and comprehensive. It includes both the inner psychology and outer sociology of human life and its environment. There is also a teleological trend of perfection underlying every human culture. Some social anthropologists, especially the American ones, use the term *culture* in an all-comprehensive sense. Culture comprehends all aspects of social life, language and communication, modes of production and distribution, religion and morals and different forms of art, science and technology.

Culture has been conceived by some as a value-neutral and by others as a value-loaded concept. In sociology and anthropology culture is generally used as a value-neutral concept. It is true that ethics and religion figure prominently in the works of sociology and anthropology. But the approach there is positive and descriptive. Description of ethical or religious practices is not by itself significant from any evaluation point of view.

Of course this does not mean that culture has no value connotation at

all. When we say of a man "he is perfectly *cultured*" or "he is *urbane* and *sophisticated*" or "he is *crude* and *rustic*", each of these concepts has, may be somewhat indefinite, value significance of its own. In this context culture is a body of norms and standards of perfection. In the scale of perfection human actions and dispositions are arranged in a graded manner. In the face of diverse usages of the concept of culture it would be wrong to suggest that there is only one correct view about it and the rest is indefensible.

## II

### *What Sustain and What Destroy Civilisation and Culture*

Sri Aurobindo delineates the concepts of culture and civilisation both diachronically or dynamically and synchronically or in the still frame of time. He thinks that through the different phases of the human cycle we are moving towards a definite goal, perfect end. Obviously all people of a particular phase of the human cycle cannot be of identical, or even similar, disposition. Diversity in unity is in the nature of all things and beings. Individuals being free as they are cannot be uniformly shaped or influenced by their contemporary civilisation and culture. It cannot be truly said of every modern man that he is more civilised and cultured than his primitive forefather. Environed by modern civilisation and culture man is always free *not* to be influenced by his attending circumstances. So "a primitive man in modern society" is not a contradiction in terms. What I am saying now is more a matter of exception than of general principle. All things being equal, environment of modern civilisation is much more helpful than that of primitive society in shaping and developing the personality of man. One *can* live contrary to the spirit of his time. But that does not negate the fact that the common run of mankind is influenced very much by the spirit of their time.

Because of his mind, mental will and symbolic power, man is not tied down to his own and nature's physical part of the existence. He can turn his mind on to its own workings and also to their physical and vital conditions. It is the faculty of free and intelligent will which is said to have enabled man to be civilised, to disengage himself from his material and vital conditions of living and growing, and to explore some possibilities of wider and deeper organisation. Man alone is symbolic and creative animal. Although human action is occasioned by some objective instance and directed towards some objective or objectified goal, the object is not to be over-emphasised, for that objectivity is transformed by our intelligent will-power into its own image. In other words, the subjective and symbolic powers of our reason impart a new character to what objectively influences and encourages our

mental functions. The essence of freedom of action or creative freedom consists not so much in removing external constraint as in assimilating and internalising them. The alchemy of assimilation and internalisation is a matter of experience and cultivation and not of demonstration. Rational will-power is of utmost importance in securing freedom for us, freedom from external pressures and fleeting impulses of the moment. The institutions and organisations of society are essentially expressive of our stable rational dispositions. They may be emotionally and impulsively enjoyed and exploited but in that case sooner or later they turn out to be useless form. Their good and beauty start disappearing. Social institutions should not be built up on the basis of fixed and cold reasoning either. For in that case they stifle the possibilities of human development in different directions. The human soul gets completely out of touch with the "feel" of social life. This formalistical drift of modern society is evident especially in its cultural sphere, in arts, painting and sculpture.

The deep secret of the mental being is yet unknown to a man as a race. It is on the realisation of this deep secret that, Sri Aurobindo believes, a higher culture could be established. This higher culture is essentially an inner culture and spiritual in character. The man in the street is still predominantly vital. Instinct of possession is his dominant characteristic. If not otherwise regulated or controlled, natural drift of his mind is towards possessive individualism. Of course this does not mean the re-appearance of crude materialism and old barbarism. The materialist and the barbarian identify the self with the body and the physical life. In the earliest period of the human cycle this complete identification was indeed a necessity. For it alone and alone could afford the common ground of human unity. That period is long over.

Modern materialism or barbarism, is considerably different from the old one. The new findings of natural and life sciences have discovered a new horizon before man. He has now good ground and strong reason to believe that the physical veil of nature more conceals than expresses the true and inner nature of reality. The physical nature separates man from man. It is only in the social space man finds a common ground to meet and to be united with fellow human beings. Underlying our social meeting ground or community there is a spiritual unity. Man must first know his true self and through the self the said unity. And that knowledge would be the basis of the richest and durable human unity.

Sri Aurobindo draws a line of distinction between the message of the sages, "know thyself" and the message of the thinker, "educate thyself". Self-knowledge is a difficult and serious proposition. Self-education is an important proposition. Anything serious and difficult is generally avoided these days.



The common man is generally interested to get something done either by machine or by others and not in doing it himself. Lack of self knowledge is the main reason why the modern man in the modern society is becoming increasingly dependent on others and as a result of which the sphere and importance of State activities are steadily increasing.

Self-education is next best to self-knowledge. And man has opted for it. Education means "recognition by the race that the mind and not the life and the body are the man and that without the development of the mind he does not possess his true manhood". Quite in keeping with the demand of the time-spirit our aim of education has been defined rather superficially. It primarily takes care of "intelligence and mental capacity and knowledge of the world and things" and only secondarily and imperfectly gives some moral training and develops the aesthetic faculties. Modern education lays emphasis more on capacity and utility and less on duty and refinement. Unless and until the vitalistic over-emphasis of the practical aspect of everything human is not regulated, tempered and refined by some superior forces of inner culture, the present drift is sure to persist.

Sri Aurobindo thinks that modern industrial age is in a way returning to and developing in a different way the old Hellenic ideal. Our pragmatism is thinly quoted by conventional ethics and aesthetics. Moreover, this culture has no deeper foundation to support it. It is an elite culture confined to a very thin layer of population and has no deep root in the life of the people. Rightly understood, culture is not a thing only of outer life, a mere elegance and ornament. Similarly, one might say, civilisation is not a mere state of civil society concerned only with the physical and vital aspects of man's living. An ornamental or a superficial culture dies a natural death, since it cannot draw its nourishment from the deeper reaches of the human mind and the life of the people at large. In support of his contention Sri Aurobindo refers to the ancient history of Greece and Rome.

"The old Hellenic or Graeco-Roman civilisation perished, among other reasons, because it only imperfectly generalised culture in its own society and was surrounded by huge masses of humanity who were still possessed by the barbarian habit of mind. Civilisation can never be safe so long as, confining the cultured mentality to a small minority, it nourishes in its bosom a tremendous mass of ignorance, a multitude, a proletariat. Either knowledge must enlarge itself from above or be always in danger of submergence by the ignorant night from below. Still more must it be unsafe, if it allows enormous numbers of men to exist outside its pale uninformed by its light, full of the natural vigour of the barbarian, who may at any moment seize upon the physical weapons of the civilised without undergoing an



intellectual transformation by their culture. The Graeco-Roman culture perished from within and from without, from without by the floods of Teutonic barbarism, from within by the loss of its vitality."<sup>1</sup>

Decay and death of civilisation and culture may be prevented by science and technology. People always try to defend their civilisation with the help of weapons. By resisting external aggression a culture can certainly save itself and survive for some time at least. Culture needs some inner nourishment as well. Sri Aurobindo says that science enables civilised races to defend themselves and their culture. Unless the less civilised races take the education in science and technology and appropriately equip themselves with their practical applications they are always at a disadvantage in war against the more civilised ones. This general truth has to be accepted with some qualification. Before the invention of ballistics and guns the outcome of war used to be determined primarily by the number and quality of the fighting people. Even now the man behind the gun is said to be more important than the gun itself. Of course in the event of unthinkable nuclear warfare the role of man is bound to be very negligible. It is very curious to note that what man produces at his technological best makes himself almost irrelevant in its practical use or application. Unless it is appropriately controlled by education, man's own creation will definitely overtake him. This is one of the inherent paradoxes of the modern industrial and technological civilisation.

A good system of education does not give man only that sort of power which has use-value but also that sort of power which enables him to regulate and control himself. Science is not to be valued only for its practical use. It has a truth-value of its own, irrespective of its practical and technological consequences. Knowledge has a charm of its own. At least in some cases knowledge is an end itself, giving us a comprehension and vision of reality accompanied by a unique sense of satisfaction.

Aggressiveness or militancy is no proof of the soundness of a culture. It is just the opposite.

## III

### *Two Cultures : Ethical and Aesthetic*

The pursuit of the mental life for its own sake is what Sri Aurobindo calls culture. To reach the mental plane man has to pass through some other planes of existence in the course of evolution. The vital plane provides the base of barbarism which may be taken as the latest hour of the night before the bursting of the dawn of civilisation. The mental plane has two sides, the vital-mental and the active-mental. The former is predominantly expres-

sive of the subjective direction of the social evolution although with the objective as its occasion and the latter of the objective direction of the social evolution although subjection as its occasion. If the subjective direction of the mental being loses its objective orientation, its degeneration into a sort of egoism is inevitable. If, on the other hand, the objective direction is subjectively regulated by the intimacy and authenticity of knowledge, it tends to be a purposeless movement of endless journey.

It is the tension and conflict between the subjective knowledge and intention and objective needs and demands that kindle the ethical and the aesthetic being in the man. The best possible balance between the two that man the rational animal can achieve by exercise of his dynamic power of intelligent will, the *buddhi*, is bound to be unsteady and imperfect.

To Sri Aurobindo's mind, Hellenism is the paradigm of aesthetic culture and Hebraism of ethical culture. There is undoubtedly a lot of difference between different forms of ethical culture. But they are found to exhibit some common features like emphasis on will-power, importance of character, self-mastery and self-discipline. Sparta, Republican Rome before its being Graecised and Puritan England are some of the notable forms of ethical culture. The Puritan culture of England was more religious than ethical in its orientation. In spite of its emphasis on culture of conduct it gradually degenerated into a sort of "bourgeois respectability" and "Philistinism pure and simple" in the 19th century.

I do not know whether Sri Aurobindo had any acquaintance with Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the German original of which *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* was published in the years 1904-5, more than a decade before Sri Aurobindo's own work on the subject, *The Human Cycle* (1916-18) published in *Arya*. Max Weber also traces the spirit of capitalism to the Protestant ethic.

The capitalist society, all said and done, makes man primarily money-minded and of acquisitive habit. The capitalist's typical moral attitudes are all coloured with utilitarianism. To him honesty is useful because it assures credit. Punctuality, industry and frugality are virtues because they pay. But these unpleasant and ugly aspects of capitalism obviously needs some ethico-religious justifications. Calvinism in the continent and Puritanism in England provided this much needed justification. Some such patently crude characteristics of capitalism as selfishness and unscrupulousness cannot be defended against all norms of traditional ethics without some ethical maxims and religious sanctions.

Weber points out that the most important opponent with which the spirit of capitalism has had to struggle is tradition. For its self-establishment the spirit of capitalism has no other alternative but to fight the spirit of

traditionalism, to protest against it. The Protestant ethic has a dual role to play, negative and positive. Negatively speaking, it points out the typical, conventional and obsolete characters of the contemporary culture as an uncritical extension of the traditional culture. Positively speaking, it proposes to give new meaning and content to the traditional concepts of ethics and religion and with some definite, modern and utilitarian ends in view. The apology of capitalism must rationalise and try to defend the obviously indefensible practices connected with the pursuit of self-interests, money-making and wealth acquisition. By the early twentieth century, when Weber was writing his book the individualistic political, legal and economic institutions became so well-established that capitalism needed no longer the support of any religion and ethics.<sup>2</sup>

It is very interesting to note how the apologist for capitalism makes virtues out of necessities. The capitalist needs the worker to work hard and wants to exploit him more so that he may make more profit. To lend an ethical sanction and religious justification to his profit motive he glorifies work. He quotes scriptures and authorities, "work is worship"; "waste of time is sin"; "sociability, idle talk, luxury, more sleeps than what is necessary for health are all absolutely morally condemnable" and so on. He rejects the life of contemplation as valueless and admires that of hard work, leading to money-making, as an ethical calling fulfilling God's desire.<sup>3</sup> Besides, ascetic importance is attached to "fixed calling" as an ethical justification of the modern specialised division of labour. Acquisition of wealth is not at all condemned unless it encourages idleness and sinful enjoyment of life or it turns out to be inconsistent with the practice of "work is worship". Acquisitive activity is justified by tagging it to the advisability of limited consumption. Limited consumption implies accumulation of capital through ascetic compulsion to save.<sup>4</sup> One can thus easily multiply the instances how the underlying implications of the ascetic maxims of English Puritanism account for the origin and spirit of capitalism. Puritanism has been rightly characterised as English Hebraism. And it is no accident that the Jewish community, given scope and opportunity, has shown exceptional success in the capitalist enterprises.

From this we must not conclude that Jewish people have not excelled in other spheres of life. Social generalisations are always of limited character. In fact contrary forces interplay in every society and in every age. The environment of Puritanism, for instance, did not prevent the rise of a unique genius like Rembrandt. It is true that Puritan tolerates artistic pursuits but he always insists on their *means*-value, means leading to the glorification and expression of God in all works of man. He allows man to acquire goods only as a trustee of God.

Weber observes:

"This worldly Protestant asceticism . . . acted powerfully against the spontaneous enjoyment of possessions; it restricted consumption, especially of luxuries. On the other hand, it had the psychological effect of freeing the acquisition of goods from the inhibitions of traditionalistic ethics. It broke the bonds of the impulse of acquisition in that it not only legalised it, but . . . looked upon it as directly willed by God".<sup>6</sup>

Thinkers are not unanimous on the point whether culture is a unifying or differentiating force. Rightly understood, religious culture, based on some or other form of monotheism, should be or lead to a universal culture. But historical facts do not confirm this expectation or conjecture. Catholic culture, for instance, is not as tolerant as its name might suggest. Nor the Protestant culture has always lived up to its protestant profession. Often it has been found to be an ally of political conservatism and economic status-quoism. Further, one might point out, Hinduism has allowed rigid and irrational stratification within its fold despite the fact that of all well-known religions it is least institutionalised.

These days when we are being constantly told of the inevitable class character of culture, it is really refreshing to remember Mathew Arnold's view that the role of culture is essentially unifying. And it is said to be the meeting point of all classes. What culture requires for its development is an ordered state of society. It is on this ground that Arnold contrasts culture to anarchy.<sup>8</sup> Sri Aurobindo's classification of culture resembles very much Arnold's. Arnold says, culture is a study of perfection.<sup>7</sup> Culture may be purely scientific, scientific, or ethical. His own preference is for the latter, i.e., ethical culture. Culture gives light and sweetness. The men of culture are social and sociable by disposition. They try to remove from society whatever is dark in it and thus to humanise it more and more by disseminating sound ideas and by preaching and practising noble ideals. A good society must be a free society otherwise it cannot be an ethical society. Freedom is essential for the attainment of perfection. It is granted that so long the individual stands low in the scale of perfection, the State cannot grant unrestricted freedom to the citizen. If the State authority is weakened and society remains divided into the Barbarians, the Philistines and the Populace, anarchy is unavoidable. Anarchy is the main enemy of culture. Culture is the meeting point of all the three classes. Hence the necessity of authority and it should be based on right reason and fine spirit.

In spite of their different class attitudes, the Barbarians (the aristocratic class), the Philistines (the middle class) and the Populace (the poor class) may be united by the universal human spirit and on the common meeting

ground of culture. Culturally they may be united but not politically. For the representatives of the different classes are obliged to please their respective electorate's natural humours and taste for the bathos. The Barbarian culture means, among other things, the care for the body and all manly exercises, high spirit, choice, manners, prowess and distinguished bearing. The Barbarian culture is almost entirely external and decorative. The Philistines have little or no liking for sweetness and light. They want a grand mechanical life, worldly splendour, security, power, pleasure, simulated morality and pretended religion. Their morality is superficial and religiosity simulated. The Populace want the liberty of behaving as they like, marching and meeting where they like and crying and breaking what they like.

It is clear that Arnold is not in favour of any of these cultures. His classification is very clear-cut but may not be entirely correct. To make out his own points on culture he highlights and even dramatises the negative features of the Barbarian, Philistine and popular or mass cultures. It is not necessarily true that all Barbarian cultures are superficial and decorative in character. The identity of what we call Barbarian culture is often misconstrued by us. An alien culture, especially when it is primitive, is taken to be and characterised as barbarian. Our "modern" orientation or too much pre-occupation with our own culture is responsible for taking as barbarian other alien or little known cultures. This is a typical and fallacious attitude of the positivist mind. A man shut up in windowless culture can hardly be expected to be fair to a culture to which he is a stranger and for which he has no sympathy. Sympathetic understanding is a primary requisite to do away with defects and danger of cultural lag or distance. Secondly, the use of the term Philistine is value-loaded and expressive of a critical attitude. It is undoubtedly true that *mechanical*, *material* and *hedonic* are some of very appropriate words necessary for the description of contemporary bourgeois culture. But it would be an over-simplification to suggest that there is nothing subtle, sophisticated or sweet in this culture. In fact, vigour, fastness and adaptability are some of the most remarkable characteristics of it. Perhaps the most baneful effect of bourgeois culture is selfishness. Its accent on the ethics of success leads to acceptance or rejection of everything in terms of end-value in total disregard of means-value. This exposes the inner paradox of bourgeois culture. To get to his end what a man has to *initially* forget is the end itself and not the means leading to it. This is the quintessence of *Niskāma Dharma*. Finally, one cannot fail to notice Arnold's unsympathetic description of the culture of the Populace or proletarian culture. It is rather simplistic to suggest that the proletarian masses do not know what to do with the liberty, or that they cry and break whatever they like. Their lack of education does not take away what experience imparts them. They know what

they lack and what they need. Over-impressed by our own culture and lack of reflective consciousness of the factors influencing our own cultural evaluation, we fail to assess other cultures, especially their value components, aesthetic and ethical, in their proper perspective. We often forget that the nicest flowers of our culture might appear quite absurd, ridiculous or inelegant in the eye of people of different but quite comparable cultures. It is not easy to get over the attending epistemic difficulties of cultural relativity. Universal culture might provide a mere notional solution of the problem. But it is a quite different proposition to live and breathe a universal culture.

Arnold's clear-cut classification of cultures is *descriptively* inadequate. The three types of culture he speaks of are primarily to be taken as *ideal types* rather than description of specific cultures. What is true of Arnold's classification is true also of Sri Aurobindo's. Sri Aurobindo speaks of a supra-rational and universal spiritual culture which connects and provides essential unity of all cultures. Arnold speaks of some exceptional human beings who belong to none of the above-mentioned class-cultures, but who by virtue of their general human spirit understand the problems of all other classes and successfully try to solve and co-ordinate them. Curiously enough, Arnold characterises these children of light and sweetness as aliens. In practice, ideal types turn out to be of two broad forms, Hebraism and Hellenism, "the governing idea of Hellenism is *spontaneity of consciousness*; that of Hebraism *strictness of consciousness*."<sup>8</sup>

The leading ideas of Hebraism are self-control, discipline, uniformity and morality. Arnold and Sri Aurobindo are in complete agreement in their characterisation of this rigorous culture. The rigours of this culture cannot be said to be always consistent with the aims and actions of the individual or the aggregate. We know of many individuals of the business community in our society who apparently live a very austere life but do not hesitate to exploit or even to endanger the health of others to satisfy their lust for money. Behavioural austerity and profit-motive may well co-exist in the Hebraic human character. The question is whether this co-existence can be peaceful and permanent without deforming the intended Hebraic character itself.

One may pertinently observe here that distortion of Hebraism by itself is not a valid criticism of this form of culture. Nonetheless it has to be admitted that the validity or otherwise of a particular concept of culture is to be primarily determined by its *historical* development and application and not in terms of its internal coherence or abstract theoretical plausibility. The history of imperialism and its defenders, for instance, frequently refer to Hebraism and argue that foreign domination is not meant for exploitation

but for liberation of the backward countries from poverty and ignorance. It is interesting to note that almost all imperial nations invoke ideology and ethics in justification of their aggression and domination. They aim at internal discipline and external expansion. Any expansion that is not animated by the spirit of love and co-operation is bound to rely more on physical force than on ethical persuasion for its continuance.

Any discipline that is imposed on man without being consented to by him may serve some dying cause but not without disturbing the natural development of his character. One-sided emphasis on discipline of character cannot give man the abiding delight of living. The rigours of Spartan and disciplined Hebraic culture and Kantian morals take away the sweetness of life. Sri Aurobindo observes, the man of ethical culture "tends to distrust art and the aesthetic sense as something lax and emollient, something in its nature undisciplined and by its attractive appeals to the passions and emotions destructive of a high and strict self-control." In the early Republican Rome every measure was taken to repel the Hellenic influence on the Roman people because of its alleged corrupting character. Similarly Sparta did not allow an iota of aesthetic culture to grow within its realm except only in the form of martial music and poetry. Rigorous ethical culture entertains and encourages many customs and practices which, by every test, should be condemned as cruel or immoral and impedes the development of the gentler and more delicate side of moral character and conduct. The delight of living demands freedom of living, growing and perfecting all human faculties, good and beautiful. "The human mind needs to think, feel, enjoy, expand; expansion is its very nature and restriction is only useful to it in so far as it helps to study, guide and strengthen its expansion."<sup>9</sup>

The main determining forces of aesthetic culture are beauty, enjoyment and freedom. The most pure form of this culture was found in the Athenes of Chidias and Sophocles. A refined aesthetic sense suffused art, music, drama, poetry, sculpture and architecture of the time. The philosophical ideas of the contemporary thinkers have earned a proverbial importance for their aimlessness. They lacked in steadiness. The Sophoclean Athenes is known for its tepid, conventional and customary morality and superficial religion characterised by its pleasant rites and festivals, artistic creation and aesthetic enjoyment. It was an age of beauty but without any character and stability. It is this urge of the human mind to expand without being steady and without assuming a character accounts for its rather quick decline within a century. The form of beauty overran its content and the art of rhetorical persuasion carried away man from his feeling for and of truth.<sup>10</sup> The structure of an aesthetical culture without an ethical foundation, without commitment to truth and justice, is bound to be unstable.



The reaction of the subsequent thinkers and artists against this brief and glorious period of ancient Greece is very interesting and instructive to note. Sri Aurobindo observes, "Plato . . . felt himself obliged first to censure and then to banish the poets from his ideal polity". One might controvert whether Plato really intended to exclude Fine Arts from his Republic. But his strictures against aimless aesthetic culture and his approval of a virile culture are unmistakable. Dunning emphasises this point when he writes:

"The *apriori* and idealising method of Plato's political philosophy does not conceal even from the casual reader the intimate relation between the doctrines enunciated and the currents of practical Greek politics. It does not require the explicit eulogy of Sparta which several times occurs to reveal that the Peloponnesian state and the system she represents constitute the model from which the philosopher draws his inspiration."<sup>11</sup>

The inadequacy and unsatisfactoriness of what follows in practice from an one-sided aesthetic culture deeply impressed the contemporary thinkers and they were trying to find a way out and draw a blue-print along the line. This view is clearly confirmed by Toynbee also.

"In adapting the Spartan system to their own ideas they (the Athenian post-war philosophers) sought to improve upon it in two ways: first by working it out to its logical extremes and, secondly, by the imposition of a sovereign intellectual caste (Plato's "Guardians"), in the likeness of the Athenian philosophers [austere rationalists] themselves, upon the Spartiate military caste, which is to be taught to play a second fiddle in the Utopian orchestra."<sup>12</sup>

The aesthetic view of life needs a solid basis of well-formed character for its establishment and acceptance. Otherwise the cult of beauty which depends entirely on spontaneity and has no definite character of its own gradually loses its sense of direction and turns out to be blind or aimless. Similarly the religion without any spiritual foundation and of the superficial aesthetic type tends to degenerate into corruption. Sri Aurobindo refers to Italy of the Renaissance as a clear example of the insufficiency of the aesthetic view of life.<sup>13</sup> Action, Hallam, Michelet, Voltaire and Burckhardt, among others, regard Renaissance as pre-eminently a revival of classical rationalism. Sri Aurobindo rejects this view. According to him, this is not correct at least in the case of its birthplace, Italy. When Russell says, "the long centuries of ascetism were forgotten in riot of art, poetry and pleasure", we find a confirmation of Sri Aurobindo's view of the Renaissance. The riotous culture of beauty opened wide the door of the revival of learning, philosophical and scientific. But the aesthetic culture of the period was so completely devoid of the ethical impulse and content that it was deeply resented and strongly



protested against. The voice of resentment and protest was raised first from Italy itself by Savonarola, a Florentine friar, but found more organised expression in the ethical minded Teutonic nations. This provided the background to Reformation. Italy could not get back her own national character until Mazzini supplemented her aesthetic culture by the revival of a new impulse of will, self-discipline and self-mastery.

The creation of a higher culture than the aesthetic and ethical ones demands their true integration. The creative initiative should come from intelligent will, the will that has an eye to see and see through, the will that has nourished but not captivated by the sense of good or beauty. Man alone has that unique faculty of reason and rational will which enables him to integrate the purposes of the ethical impulse and the potentialities of the aesthetic emotion both in our inner and outer life. Sri Aurobindo finds in the Reformation of Europe a vindication of the freedom of the religious mind. It was an insurgence not so much of the reason but of the moral instinct and its ethical need. The task of organising the revolt against the dogmatic religious mind was left to Science. The Reformation marked the end of dogmatism and only the beginning of rationalism but not its establishment. Its dominant orientation was more ethical and religious than rational and aesthetic. Truth and right were the key words of the age. The spirit of the age found wonderful expression in Erasmus and Luther.

Aesthetic impulse should be given a character and ethical one a direction and beautiful form if they are to be of durable type and lasting value. The autonomy of willing and feeling faculties should not be taken as a justification for rejecting the claim of reason to provide them a clearer and self-conscious idea of their objective. Except reason the other two faculties of mind are said to be engrossed in themselves and when any of them seizes hold of man it carries him away straight in that way without affording him at all the freedom and opportunity to realise the rationality of the means and the value of the goal. A settled habit of feeling, which is not quite conscious of the qualities of the felt, is not by itself of much significance. The same perhaps may be said of a blindly settled habit of willing. If we will and persist in willing something just under the pressure of the past experience and without being cognitively persuaded of the rightness or goodness of the object of will, our will is devoid of any ethical content. All human faculties have their own law and logic, but it is not possible for every man to discover them individually and clearly. Sri Aurobindo thinks that feeling or willing cannot co-ordinate the different functions of the human mind. The nature and result of mental activities make it abundantly clear that mind does act in a co-ordinated way. The task of co-ordination has been attributed to reason.

The role of reason is to undo the miseffects of functional exclusiveness of feeling and willing and to enable them to be reflective and through reflection co-operative between themselves. Reason is credited with a unique power. Remaining faithful to its own law and logic it may simultaneously attend, understand and co-ordinate the movements of feeling and willing. At the intervention of reason, feeling and willing are released from their immediacy and then they can reflect on their own content and objective.

This line of Sri Aurobindo's analysis of the human mind and its faculties and functions remind one of Kant and his followers. T. H. Green, for example, says, "the determination of will by reason . . . which constitutes moral freedom or autonomy must mean its determination by an object which a person willing, in virtue of his reason, presents to himself, that object consisting in the realisation of an idea of perfection in and by himself."<sup>14</sup> Similarly one might explicate aesthetic autonomy in terms of man's realisation of an idea of harmony or a beautiful form in and by himself. In so far as Sri Aurobindo is concerned the exclusiveness of the mental faculties is confined to the superficial sense-mind, the empirical mind. The deeper reaches of the human mind are spiritually integrated and know no line of sharp demarcation in between themselves.

#### IV

##### *Two Cultures : Transcendental and Hedonic*

Man may use reason for its own sake, for disinterested pursuit of knowledge which gives him freedom, delight and intellectual culture and power. Rational will has a direction and a capacity to organise or constitute by appropriate actions the object and aim of its will. In fact all human institutions in some way or other answer our persistent and rational will. Obviously its converse is not true. All that we need and will cannot be realised by us because of our limited actual capacity. In its free formulations of ideals, reason tends to soar high above the actual and limiting conditions of our life and society. Reason has both speculative and practical functional dimensions. It has both analytic powers, sorting, sifting and classifying the objects of experience, and synthetic powers, organising and systematising the unit-objects of experience. In spite of its sense-inclination, reason of the empirical mind can work at abstract and theoretical levels. In our ordinary level of existence reason is an extraordinary power.

"Reason is science, it is conscious art, it is invention. It is observation and can seize and arrange truth of facts; it is speculation and can extricate and forecast truth of potentiality. It is the idea and its fulfilment, the ideal and its bringing to fruition. It can look through the

immediate appearance and unveil the hidden truths observed in it. It is the servant and yet the master of all utilities; and it can, putting away all utilities, seek disinterestedly truth for its own sake and by finding it reveal a whole world of new possible utilities. Therefore it is a sovereign power by which man has become possessed of himself, student and master of his own force, the godhead or which the other godheads in him have leaned for help in their ascent; it has been the Prometheus of the mythical parable, the helper, the instructor, elevating friends, civiliser of mankind."

Sri Aurobindo's understanding of the role of reason has two aspects in it, what reason is and what reason should be. In its positive role, reason is a co-ordinator of other faculties of the human mind. But it can achieve something more in the light of the spirit. It has both a discursive function and also a unifying one. When rationalists like Spinoza characterise reason as a non-competitive and universal good they obviously highlight the universal function of reason. Reason is neither an entity nor a substance. It is whatever it is in and through the being and doing of man. A society cannot be rational on its own account. Its rationality or otherwise depends upon the functional quality of the mind of the concerned human beings. Reason may act as a disinterested power surveying and unifying the different functions of the mind without being involved in their limiting and differentiating grooves. But often, as we all know, reason works under the strong forces of the physical-vital life.

It is the second aspect of reason's functioning that is emphasised by empiricists. David Hume, for instance, says, "when I give preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence." If reason is defined in this infra-rational and emotive way, then rational good cannot commend itself for universal acceptance. According to the empiricist, that object is good the contemplation of which evokes an emotional approval towards it in most men. Emotions of approval are said to be *caused* by what is immediately pleasant *either* to us or to some other men and what is *useful* in the sense that they must be ultimately and indirectly productive of pleasure either to us or to some other men.

Sri Aurobindo does not deny this positive role or correct description of what reason ordinarily does as a matter of fact. But he refuses to accept that this is all what reason is capable of doing and achieving. Positive reason performs an instrumental role and is subject to the narrow and egoistic limitations of the sense-mind. Reason may be given a different orientation, spiritual orientation. The spiritual mind is all-inclusive or integral, gives free play to the activity of reason and functions of the sense-mind, and directs them

to the unity of the individual and society. According to Sri Aurobindo, it is "the nodus of the persistent individual and persistent aggregate life".

Sri Aurobindo is aware that the spiritualism has often been mistaken and criticised as a sort of transcendentalism, metaphysical denial of the sense world. In the name of religion and spirituality, as we had occasion to refer before, poverty has been practically confirmed, austerity glorified and exploitation indirectly justified. Many pro-Marxist thinkers, who are otherwise very critical of philosophical empiricism and ethical emotivism, have particularly attacked this interpretation of spiritualism. Whether this interpretation is a correct interpretation or an intended one is of course a different question.

This sort of transcendental spiritualism gives rise to what Herbert Marcuse calls "affirmative culture".<sup>13</sup> The spiritual good is just opposed to the material good elevated somewhere beyond the reach of human senses. Epistemological dualism between sense and reason corresponds to ethical dualism between material good and spiritual good. Spiritual good cannot be known by the sense-mind. We need a sort of rational insight, a third eye, to know what is spiritually good, good for ever and good for all.

"By affirmative culture is meant that culture of the bourgeois epoch which led in the course of its own development to the segregation from civilization of the mental and spiritual world as an independent realm of value that is also considered superior to civilization. Its decisive characteristic is the assertion of a universally obligatory, eternally better and more valuable world that must be unconditionally affirmed: a world essentially different from the factual world of the daily struggle for existence, yet realizable by every individual for himself 'from within', without any transformation of the state of fact. It is only in this culture that value which elevates them above the everyday sphere. Their reception becomes an act of celebration and exaltation."

The pro-Marxist thinks that bourgeois culture suffers from an anxiety complex. This culture conceals the unpleasant and ugly conditions of social life. Defenders of this culture extol some abstract values, ethical and aesthetic, unrelated to the material conditions of life. In order to justify this rootless view of culture they have to develop an elaborate speculative system. Spiritual man, intuitive knowledge, self-evident theory of truth, permanence in change, beauty underlying the ugly freedom within bondage are some of the main elements of the system. To beautify the soul man is asked to forget his bodily misery. To be good he is asked to cultivate and realise the virtues of poverty and austerity. The constraints of the mode of production and distribution of the capitalist system force a man to be lonely or atomic purely as a matter of fact. "Factual loneliness is sub-limited to metaphysical

loneliness and, as such, is accorded the entire aura and rapture of inner plenitude alongside external poverty."

The pro-Marxist critique of bourgeois culture is understandable and to a certain extent acceptable to Sri Aurobindo. But the narrow connotation of spiritualism attacked by the Marxist is not what Sri Aurobindo proposed to defend. In fact he in his own way scathingly criticises bourgeois civilisation and culture. In "The Two Negations: The Materialist Denial and the Refusal of the Ascetic" of *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo argues that the materialist denial of the beyond and the spiritualist rejection of the transient are two untenable extremes. As a corrective to ascetism he recommends materialism, materialism with a difference. It brings us nearer to the intricate operation of the forces of physical nature and enables us to discover the laws underlying the chaotic multiplicity of the physical things. Materialism is self-corrective. Its own progress makes it conscious of its own inadequacy. Fallibilism of science is indication of the limitation of science and also of the scientist's awareness of the same.

From the materialist's mistake one must not conclude that the transcendentalist is right in denying the importance of what is transient and worldly. The superficial or the positivistic affirmation of physical realities is a negation of supra-physical realities. The reason is very simple. Sri Aurobindo observes, the glimpses of supra-physical realities acquired by positivistic methods are "still crude and defective". This materialistic denial or positivistic affirmation is not the last word in man's quest for deeper truth and higher reality. Sri Aurobindo speaks of subtle senses witnessing physical facts beyond the range of corporeal organs.

While we must avoid the pitfall of the materialist denial of the spiritual range of reality, Sri Aurobindo warns us, we cannot afford to ally ourselves with the revolt of spirit against the material world, the world of sense perception.

"It is this revolt of Spirit against Matter that for two thousand years, since Buddhism disturbed the balance of the old Aryan world, has dominated increasingly the Indian mind . . . all have lived in the shadow of the great Refusal and the final end of life for all is the garb of the ascetic . . . renunciation the sole path of knowledge, acceptance of physical life the act of the ignorant, cessation from birth the right use of the human birth, the call of the Spirit, the recoil from Matter."<sup>16</sup>

Marcuse's criticism of the affirmative culture rests on a superficial appreciation of the spiritual culture. From Sri Aurobindo's point of view positivistic affirmation is not the only possible or even the right sort of affirmation. "We seek indeed a larger and completer affirmation."<sup>17</sup> This affirmation is

essentially spiritual in character. Spirituality does not flourish in the void. It is based on the material conditions of life, on the power and joy of life. Stupendous vitality, prolific creativity and material abundance are the ranges which the spiritual mind conquers. The spiritual mentality is the foundation of Indian culture and civilisation. It rejects no part of human life, vital or intellectual. On the contrary, it affirms both the joy of life and exploration of reason. "It is a great error to suppose that spirituality flourishes best in an impoverished soil with the life half-killed and the intellect discouraged and intimidated."<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo is unmistakably for an integral spiritual culture which is opulent in vitality and opulent in intellectuality. He notes in the ancient Indian spirit a strong intellectuality which is "at once austere and rich, robust and minute, powerful and delicate, massive in principle and curibus in detail". In *The Foundations of Indian Culture* Sri Aurobindo shows with a plethora of examples drawn from the history of Indian art, literature and polity that the Indian spirit has wonderfully harmonised vitality and intellectuality on its broad and sure foundation.

The broad and deeper interpretation of Indian culture offered by Sri Aurobindo should not lead one to believe that it has been accepted and practised in the correct way. The metaphysical bias dominated the Indian mind. That does not mean that we or our forefathers were quite oblivious of the importance of *Kama*, sense-life, or *Artha*, economic life. But since the transcendental attitude, a resultant of the metaphysical bias, got the better of other attitudes of life, the typical Indian mind started looking down upon the pursuits of pleasure and money. In the order of values sacrifice, toleration and austerity have been rated higher over the values like enjoyment and acquisition. It is not that Hedonic tradition is unknown to the Indian culture or that sense pleasure has always been dubbed as a natural quality of bodily sensation devoid of any ethical content. The basic point of Hedonism and utilitarianism has been conceded and this concession has been grudging, more factual and less evaluative in character. Necessity and utility are matters of fact and not of values. The metaphysical bias and transcendental logic succeeded in abstracting the order of value from that of fact, product from the process, extolling the former in isolation from the latter.

A degenerate form of a culture should not be singled out for the purpose of criticism. In the context of Indian culture it has been repeatedly argued that its practical aspect or behavioural exterior should not be taken too seriously. To understand it properly one is often advised to get into its soul, spiritual ingoings and depth. This advice is well taken by the sympathetic critic. But even then the question remains whether the identity of a culture is to be found only in its spiritual depth in total disregard of its material forms and behavioural manifestations.

In fairness to Sri Aurobindo it has to be clearly admitted that he has closely looked into this question. Notwithstanding his metaphysical bias he tries to discover and demonstrate a continuous thread between spiritual ingoings and material outgoings of Indian culture. He is not one of those superficial philosophers of Indian culture who is easily vulnerable to the Marxist criticism, as echoed by Marcuse, for instance, that abstraction of the spiritual from the material and glorification of the former at the expense of the latter are the requirements of the feudal and bourgeois modes of production and exploitation. In fact Sri Aurobindo does not resort to abstractionist strategy. One might say, his is an integrationist strategy. He proposes to integrate the two aspects of culture, the outer and the inner, and, what is more interesting to note, *in reality* they are integrated. The question of integration comes up in a big way before us only because the interest and attention of the sense-mind are almost exclusively confined to what is outer and easily perceptible. Once man develops his inlook, he ceases to be satisfied with what is furnished by his senses and starts making use of his powerful intuitive capacity, he discovers a new world, a larger and richer world than he is ordinarily conscious of. Sri Aurobindo refuses to accept the dualism between fact and value. He rejects utilitarianism in its classical form, but is quite persuaded of its relevance in life.

"Utility is a fundamental principle of existence and all fundamental principles of existence are in the end one; therefore it is true that the highest good is also the highest utility . . . Good, not utility, must be the principle and standard of good, otherwise we fall into the hands of that dangerous pretender expediency whose whole method is alien to the ethical . . . There is only one safe rule for the ethical man, to stick to his principle of good, his instinct for good, his intuition of good and to govern by that his conduct."<sup>10</sup>

In terms of spiritual intuition Sri Aurobindo proposes to integrate the inner and the outer life of man. To ensure their integration and prevent clash between them man has to free himself from his servile subjection to the sense-mind and disengage the intellect from its function of turning passions and instincts into ethical ideals. In other words, the intellect is not to be used to *rationalise* what is infra-rational. On the contrary, it has to discover the *rationale* underlying human passions, emotions and instincts. Man can do it only when he is guided by spiritual power and light. This power is not something alien to our own nature and this light is not to be borrowed from a different world. Social existence, daily life and thousand other small and big pre-occupations of man do not in any way stand on his way to realise the unity between his inner being and his outer environment. In fact, the reflective man does not quite know where his being ends and



environment starts. Being may be alienated from its root-reference and objectified by abstract reasoning, and environment incorporated and assimilated by intuitive consciousness within the being. The line of demarcation between the two cannot be clearly drawn and maintained. The dialectic of being and environment, man and nature, effects increased integration between the two. This correct perspective is not clear before the sense-mind. Pull of instinct, drive of emotion and turmoil of passion provide him a juxtaposed picture of man and environment. Unless man's intellect is calmed and illumined by spiritual power and light, he cannot quite see how natural stimulations and social connections could present him a lavish and manifold opportunity to discover and express the deeper reaches and higher heights of his being. The spiritual standpoint enables him to realise that his so-called material environment and social situation are in different ways constitutive of his own being. This also opens up before him a new dimension of relationship between himself and otherselves. The relation between the subjective and the objective is re-discovered at a deeper level where the subjective is a door-way to the objective and the objective a field of freedom for the subjective. Without a creative and dynamic integration between the two an ethical society and an ethical culture cannot be established and maintained.

For otherwise moral values, unsustained by live and creative intentions, would tend to degenerate into dead conventions. Norms turn out to be mere forms. This is a typical symptom of the typical-conventional age. Strongly under the influence of this age human reason is unable to grasp the true meaning of Good. Good is an indefinable quality of the object of human desire. Intuitionists like Moore and Ross maintain that this quality is there in the very nature of the object and not attributed to it by the human mind. Sri Aurobindo thinks that basic values like Good and Beauty are not creation of man. Sense-mind perceives them as pleasant and useful. Spiritual mind can apperceive them as Good, Right, Beauty and Just. But their existence or subsistence is said to be both eternal and historical, subjective and objective at the same time. Values are expressed but not exhausted in time-process. Their time-forms may be eroded, distorted and worn out. But their locus is eternal. It is impossible for the ordinary human mind to follow the relation between the historical forms and expressions of the basic values and their eternal locus. It has been claimed that the spiritual mind is not subject to this limitation and disability.

Every culture has a career of its own and it can be studied for theoretical or analytical purposes independently of the life of the concerned people. But in fact traits and qualities of the individual human beings are ultimate constituents and determinants of the character of a particular culture. For classificatory purpose we differentiate ethical culture from aesthetic culture.



Every culture has multiple value commitments reflective of the different aspects and intentions of the basic human nature. Because of its dominant ethical bias a particular culture is characterised as ethical. That obviously does not mean that it lacks in aesthetic orientation. The same is true of an aesthetic culture as well. Man is the basic unit of society and therefore his intention and action cannot but somehow be reflected in his cultural environment.

The search for beauty and the search for good are native to human nature. The object of search is real independent of him and his intention is to realise it. The denial of this position results in committing the hedonistic fallacy, viz. to define good in terms of utility and beauty in terms of pleasure. It is well known that some virtues, love of knowledge e.g., have no apparent use-value. Similarly, one might point out, the tragic sense of life far from being pleasant is marked by a sort of drawing painfulness, melancholic beauty, but its aesthetic value is undeniable. Morality and beauty of a society depend upon the development and strength of the ethical aesthetic traits of the concerned individuals. I say "development and strength" because the *origin* of these two sentiments are there in the very roots of our life. Aesthetic enjoyment and ethical satisfaction work almost as instincts of human nature. Both in our ethical and aesthetic pursuits the role of reason is intermediary or tertiary. It discerns, corrects, enlightens and points out the deficiencies and the crudities of our ethical and aesthetic instincts and impulses and tries to lay down certain criteria and norms to improve and purify our conduct and appreciation by superior taste and valid knowledge. "A complete and universal appreciation of beauty and the making entirely beautiful our whole life and being must surely be a necessary character of the perfect individual and the perfect society."<sup>20</sup>

The common denominator of all basic values, good, beauty and truth, is *harmony*. Whether it is a work of art or right conduct or a true statement it must satisfy certain rules of harmony and must reject elements of incompatibility. Even when elements of apparent incompatibility are admitted, they are admitted deliberately to heighten a particular intended effect of unity or harmony. "Beauty is the mutual adaptation of the several factors in an occasion of experience."<sup>21</sup> It would be wrong to believe that the products of aesthetic imagination are not subject to any law or criterion. The very possibility of aesthetic judgement is indicative of the law-governed character of aesthetic process and product. I speak of *process* in addition to *products* because, I know, little reflection would show that even aesthetic appreciation admits of gradation and valuation. It is in this context one has to realise the importance of the Kantian concept of the *free lawfulness* of beauty. Artist's imagination is not licensed for flight from reality or truth. His free-

dom of imagination has its inner compulsion or regulation. Without trivialising the concept of truth one has to understand how the artist is faithful or true to his aesthetic experience and what prevents him to express something else within a time-frame. "The work of art which on a given occasion a given artist creates is . . . created by him not merely because he can create it but because he must."<sup>22</sup> Occasion and expression of aesthetic experience are bound to be harmonious. Similarly it might be pointed out how harmony between (sentential) appearance and (referential) reality defines or accounts for truth.

The harmony which is capable of being apprehended and expressed by reason is said to be of the formal type and therefore superficial. The search for beauty and good which is native to and originates from instinct and impulse cannot be carried forward by reason beyond a certain extent. Since involvement of reason prevents it from having the fuller picture of truth and clearer vision of beauty, the richer harmony of the elements of the object of experience, desire and delight is not revealed to the eye of reason. It is for this fact that Aurobindo assigns to the spirit the highest role of creation and disinterested enjoyment of beauty. The spirit is also the deepest fountain and the best knower of what is good. In *The Future Poetry* he argues that mental and vital interest, pleasure, pain of thought, life and action is not the source of aesthetic creation or delight. Reason provides only an insufficient perception and "harmony that exist between our internal selves and our external experience". It cannot sufficiently purify and tranquillize our emotions and feelings. Consequently it cannot be the source of poetry or any other form of expression of aesthetic experience.

"That source, when we know better the secrets of our being, turns out to be the spiritual self with its diviner consciousness and knowledge, happier fountains of power, inalienable delight of existence. The cultures that were able directly or indirectly to feel the joy of this self and spirit, got into the very strain of their aesthesis the touch of its delight, its Ananda, and this touch was the secret of the generalised instinct for beauty which has been denied to a later mind limited by intellectual activity, practical utility and the externals of life: we have to go for it to exceptional individuals gifted with a finer strain, but the wide-spread aesthetic instinct has been lost and has yet to be recovered for the common mind and recognised once more as a part of human perfection as indispensable as intellectual knowledge and at least as necessary to happiness as vital well-being."<sup>23</sup>

Sri Aurobindo anticipates the objection against the spirit as the source of aesthetic creativity. For, it may be alleged, the spirit cannot possibly perform the role of reason. The main complaint against the spiritual mind is

that it cannot perform some of the functions like criticism, discrimination and comparison which reason can. Sri Aurobindo rejects this complaint and thinks that the spiritual mind may well take up the functions of the rational mind and perform them "with power, light and insight greater and surer than the power and light of the intellectual judgement in its widest scope". The intellect excels in giving us faithful information about the form of beauty, the superficial or exterior truth of things. Its sense-aided penetration into the substance of the beautiful is never very significant and profound. It is only the spirit of beauty in us that may come in contact with both the form and the spirit, *svarūpa* and *svabhāva* of the beautiful and give expression of the form that is truly expressive of its spirit. The classical art because of spiritual inspiration highlighted what is universal and true in the spirit of the real. The romantic art, on the other hand, did much with the individual expression of what is striking. Both the classical and the romantic art are interested in portraying the universal in a subdued fashion, i.e., putting it into the background. While the former is more concerned with the spirit, the latter with its content. The primary concern of the modern art is the form or rather the deformity of objects of experience and desire.

"In truth all great art has carried in it both a classical and a romantic as well as a realistic element,—understanding realism in the sense of the prominent bringing out of the external truth of things, not the perverse inverted romanticism of the "real" which brings into exaggerated prominence the ugly, common or morbid and puts that forward as the whole truth of life."<sup>24</sup>

### *Sociology and Psychology of Civilisation and Culture : Two Views*

What Sri Aurobindo criticises as "the perverse inverted romanticism of the 'real'" has been vigorously defended by many modern anti-romantic thinkers, both Marxist and non-Marxist realist. Their main contention against the "idealist-romantic" approach is that it ignores the real state of affairs simply because it does not conform to their value commitment or normative objective. Values and ideals are no doubt very important in shaping human life and destiny. But if material conditions of existence persist in their present ugly and unpleasant forms, idealistic overtones of ethical culture and aesthetic culture would sound more as a mockery than depiction of the truth of life. The world of the artist cannot be altogether different from the actual world he lives in. The "autonomy of art" or "art for the sake of art" is a utopian slogan, says the realist. This, if not something more, is confirmed by the Marxist when he says, art is not only a product of social life but in turn has a reverse effect on it. This effect may be progressive or reactionary, depending on the class character of the artist in question. The realist or the Marxist is

not against such immortal characters as Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth or Gogol's Khlestakov. Their evil role does not diminish or take away their artistic significance. By depicting such characters the creative artist brings to the focus the importance of struggle against evil and social injustice. The Marxist's main allegation against bourgeois aesthetics is that it singles out the beautiful as the only object of art. This narrow view of aesthetics attempts to keep art away from criticism of the bourgeois society, its ugliness, vulgarity and exploitation.

To the Marxist, "the artist is only a special kind of man of action . . . art is not an end but a colour of an act". The artist cannot afford to be indifferent to the social conditions of his time. Like the bourgeois artist he also tries to carve harmony or order out of conflicting social elements. But unlike his bourgeois counterpart he has always a social end in view while engaged in his artistic contemplation and action. The Marxist says, "Our own position about beauty is this: whenever the effective elements in socially known things show social ordering, there we have beauty, there alone we have beauty."<sup>25</sup> Here the important terms to be noted are "effective elements" and "socially known". A man may know as an individual being; he may also know as a member of a class. In the second case of knowing, knowledge is said to be more authentic and representative. Knowledge may be taken as an end in itself also as a means to or plan of action. When "social knowledge" is of no "effect", the order it discovers is of little aesthetic consequence. The Marxist speaks of socialist realism as distinguished from other types of realism. He is strongly in favour of use of art as an instrument of social transformation. The real and objective situation of life and the aspirations of the people must find their expression in the works of the artist. It is admitted that the poetry of Goethe or Tagore, the music of Beethoven or Tchaikovsky or Bade Ghulam Ali, the paintings of Raphael or Ravi Verma, may satisfy aesthetic taste of different generations at different times. This is explained in terms of the fact that the artist's depiction of reality has two aspects in it, objective truth and subjective vision. Because of his vision the artist can penetrate deep into the nature of reality and depict it in some artistic forms which do not lose their appeal and value in later epochs or to other societies. Every society, while it retains the individuality of its own, shares many experiences, experiences of exploitation and struggle, for instance, with other people of other times and societies. Moreover, the Marxist claims that the great works of art of the past are somehow found to be directed against the powers of evil and injustice, against conservative and reactionary influences and expressive of their national and popular character.<sup>26</sup> It is to be noted that the Marxist has definite value commitments. He is not interested in mere description of the material and other conditions of social existence.

Man's knowledge of his environment and of his own self must somehow be of some use-value in bringing about a progressive transformation of his social environment and for the betterment of the exploited class. Therefore socialist realism is not to be confused with a sort of popular positivism. The Marxist is also conscious of his obligation to explain the universal appeal of the masterpieces of art transcending the place and time of their creation. Whether this explanation is acceptable or not is a different question. The socially conscious artist cannot indefinitely conceal his class identity and value preference.<sup>27</sup> And as a result of that his work is also subject to the demand for class partisanship. Appreciation and criticism of art and artist cannot be uniform and universally acceptable.

Socialist realism is not inconsistent with value-commitment. The socialist realist is certainly in favour of a scientific approach to sociology of values, aesthetic and ethical. He rejects the claim of the non-socialist realist who thinks that *values* are *facts* of a different order. The controversy over the possibility of value-free sociology is an old one that has not yet lost its importance and relevance.<sup>28</sup> The Marxist is undoubtedly opposed to that form of aesthetic culture which highlights the beautiful in total disregard of what is not beautiful but tragically true and that form of ethical culture which talks only about the duty of the working class and precious little about its rights and privileges. But that does not mean that he is a pro-naturalist or positivist in the sense that he is free from any value-commitment or positive ideology.

The Marxist shares Fourier's critique of four false and deceptive sciences, 'moralism', 'politics', 'economism' and 'metaphysics'. By moralism Fourier and Marx mean the pre-scientific repressive or ascetic methods of controlling the passions and emotions of men. Suppression of passion cannot be in itself a duty or virtue. Passion is to be studied and properly utilised. In the name of suppression of passion people often resort to pretension, hypocrisy and falsehood. Kant has also been accused of rigourism and totally neglecting the importance of passions, emotions and self-interest in human life. The Marxist is in favour of real satisfaction and not imaginary satisfaction of human passions. His accent on the necessity of co-ordinating one's passions and desires with those of the rest of his class puts restraints on Hedonic impulses and excesses of man. But he is certainly against rigourism and asceticism. Man cannot certainly develop the full potentiality of his personality unless his body and its social needs are accorded due recognition by the economic and moral life of the society. All-round development of human beings demands a socialist system of production and distribution entailing social justice.

In principle this position is unexceptionable. Sri Aurobindo points out the practical inadequacy of this "objective view of life". Our life, both indi-

vidual and social, may be shaped from two different, but not necessarily conflicting, points of view; the subjective and the objective. Most thinkers, including Marx and Sri Aurobindo, agree that freedom and perfection of man are twin objectives of culture and progress. They also more or less agree on the necessity of trying to realise this objective following two related methods, internal and external. Man cannot be ideally shaped exclusively relying on external techniques of planning and regulating his material conditions of existence. Nor can he possibly attain and develop his higher human potentialities only by removing his internal or psychological shortcoming and failings. The difference between the thinkers regarding freedom and perfection is mainly a question of *primacy* of method and not of method itself.

While Marx attaches primacy to the objective method, Sri Aurobindo does so to the subjective one. The latter's main criticism against the objective view of life is that it prescribes a law for human development which lies outside the human being itself. Even if this law is discovered or determined by the reason and accepted or enforced by the individual will, it is unable to make justice to the endless intricacy, complexity and creativity of the human nature. The law or even the analogy of true human freedom cannot be found or discovered in the outer world. Freedom is both a cognitive and conative capacity to master "a mass of colliding results, a whirl of potential energy" and to bring about "some supreme order and some yet unrealised harmony" out of them. Under the spell of objectivity human reason tries to conform to some external standards or criteria and therefore it excels more in systematising than in creating or innovating. Sri Aurobindo rejects the pragmatic or practical obligation of the artist as it is ordinarily understood. For it restricts his creative freedom. The artist must endeavour to see and depict human life and nature for their own sake and in their own characteristic truth and beauty. And then when spiritual insight takes him deep into the nature of things, he discovers the known things under a new and unknown light and "sees in common things parable of deep things and analogies of divinity". Sri Aurobindo reminds one of Carlyle and Ruskin. Carlyle speaks of the wonder discovered by the artist's eye in the normal things. Ruskin says, *aesthesis*, a perceptive content of art, is in end a *theoria*, a spiritual beholding." Sri Aurobindo sums up the position of spiritual-subjectivist aesthetic when he says "Genius, the true creator, is always supra-rational in its nature and in its instruments".

Also in the field of ethics Sri Aurobindo is against objectivism and rationalism as specially defined by him. His main criticism against reason, as we had occasion to note before, is that it can systematise only those elements of our experience and life which have their ratios. Some Philosophers say, unless our sense-manifold is ordered in space and time understanding cannot



transform them into object of knowledge. Here knowledge means rational discursive knowledge. In other words, a sense content to be transformed into an object of knowledge needs some prior ordering or formation in space-time co-ordinate. The spirit is not subject to this limitation of the field of operation of reason. Even where the ratios are not there in the elements of sense-experience the spirit can work and harmonise them all. On ultimate analysis the character of our society and civilisation and the quality of human life in it depend on the instrument and means used in shaping them. What is shaped by human reason is subject to the limitations of human reason. Reason is said to be just incapable of correctly informing man of his destiny. Busy in striking a working balance between the conflicting and competitive forces unleashed by different human beings, different decision-units, human reason is unconscious of the aim of the whole dynamism. Only the objective half of the social life receives its attention. And in the inadequate light of it man makes a half-conscious attempt to solve the riddles of life. It would be incorrect to think that "reason as the governor of life" has not brought about a tremendous transformation in human history. Most of the things we are proud of today are the gifts of reason. The foundation of modern civilisation is "practical reason or science". One would again note here that Sri Aurobindo is using the term "practical reason" in his own way and not in its well-known ethical context. One could also perhaps point out that science should not be taken as a synonym of practical reason for there are several purely theoretical sciences. Besides, it has to be remembered that, scientific knowledge may quite plausibly be taken as a disinterested pursuit of knowledge. Simply because a particular mode of knowledge has or could possibly have some practical application it should not be characterised as essentially practical. It may be pointed out that even the "useless" fine arts could be used or exploited for practical and commercial purposes.

However, the main point of Sri Aurobindo remains, namely the practical use of reason rather than its power to discover truth is being almost exclusively highlighted these days. When human consciousness is sense-bound in most of its movements and workings, practical orientation of reason is bound to produce and glorify a set of egoistic and vitalistic values. And that produces vitalistic and pragmatic civilisation and culture. Modern man has all the apparatus of civilisation around him which could not be even dreamt of by his forefathers. But he is not civilised within. He is obsessed by the means, mechanisms and techniques of civilisation, almost pressed under them. Modern man, in Sri Aurobindo's language, is an economic barbarian, "who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life". He has all the pretensions of culture, borrowed and conventional culture, but left to himself he is not cultured within. In the place of old

physical barbarian we have today the economic barbarian. He worships two Gods, Life and Practical Reason. His first motive of life is individualistic and that gives him an egocentric view of the world. Under this influence everything appears to him as means of his satisfaction, possession, acquisition and reproduction. The total upshot is a narrow form of possessive individualism marked with acquisitive tendency. Practical reason or science is known for its generalising tendency. But the life-forces are found to be more persistent than the rational ones. To counteract the resulting excesses of individualism, practical reason is being progressively used to develop a collectivistic or co-operative tendency. Attempts are being made to subordinate individual egos to this collectivistic tendency with a view to minimising clash and conflicts between them and maximising satisfaction of the primary impulses of life. This civilisation is a matter only for the vital part of the human being. Its size and super-structure are becoming too heavy and paraphernalia too many to be supported by the narrow and unedified vital foundation of our life. Therefore one fears that it might collapse under its own mass, *mola ruct sua*. Its accompanying culture is also a mere intellectual pabulum, a matter of exterior life, means to beautify only its visible parts, but has no inner beauty and character of its own. This is a commercial civilisation and this is a commercial culture.

“The accumulation of wealth and more wealth, the adding of possessions to possessions, opulence, show, pleasure, a cumbersome inartistic luxury, a plethora of conveniences, life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion vulgarised or coldly formalised, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment itself made a business, this is commercialism”.<sup>30</sup>

Commercial civilisation on the basis of industrialisation had its origin in the West. It has been criticised from various points of view and by such widely different thinkers as Marx, Sri Aurobindo, Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee and Pitirin Sorokin. The common denominator of their criticisms is “cash nexus” which now dominates almost all types of human relationships. Everything, every work, every value, is being commercialised. It is no wonder the ideas and ideals of utilitarianism, pragmatism and instrumentalism have found favour with a wide segment of thinkers. Some of their reaction, Spengler’s e.g., to this commercial civilisation has been tragic and pessimistic. Sorokin and Sri Aurobindo, though hopeful of the future of the mankind primarily because of their spiritual-metaphysical faith, are highly critical of the crudities and deformities of this “Sensate” or *Vaishya* civilisation. Sorokin characterises modern culture as Sensate culture and finds it in the grip of a fearful crisis.



"Every important aspect of life, organisation, and culture of Western society is included in the crisis. Its body and mind are sick and there is hardly a spot on its body which is not sore, nor any nervous fibre which functions soundly . . . We are seemingly between two epochs: the dying Sensate culture of our magnificent yesterday and the coming Ideational culture of the creative tomorrow. We are living, thinking and acting at the end of a brilliant six-hundred-year-old Sensate day. The oblique rays of the sun still illumine the glory of the passing epoch. But the light is fading, and in the deepening shadows it becomes more and more difficult to see clearly and to orient ourselves safely in the confusion of the twilight. The night of the transitory period begins to loom before us . . . with its nightmares, frightening shadows, and heart-rending horrors. Beyond it, however, the dawn of a new great Ideational culture is probably waiting to greet the men of the future".<sup>31</sup>

Sorokin's description of the dying Sensate culture is undoubtedly very touching, but one wonders whether its dark side has not been rather exaggerated. Also the hope that future will be better and brighter almost as a matter of course sounds a bit wishful. His hope, he claims, is based on the evolving and improving nature of man. He refers approvingly to Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo in his book *Reconstruction of Man*. The reconstructed man, the spiritual man, will provide the foundation of what Sorokin calls Ideational culture. Like Sorokin, Sri Aurobindo also speaks of the necessity of spiritual transformation. "The secret of the transformation lies in the transference of our centre of living to a higher consciousness . . . upward transference of our will to be." These conditions are primarily subjective and individual in character. Sri Aurobindo pointedly emphasises the concept of spiritual subjectivism, distinguishing it clearly from vital or intellectual subjectivism. The first essential condition for the coming of spiritual age is the growth of subjective idea of life, the idea of the soul, powers and possibilities, its expression and the creation of a true, beautiful and helpful environment. Subjective age is only the first step towards a spiritual age. The individual will undoubtedly be the focal point of the subjective age. There must be at the same time a communal mind to receive and propagate its light and power. The task of spiritualising the communal mind is not at all easy. The method of short-circuit, ignoring the needs of our material and vital existence, must not be resorted to. Sri Aurobindo says, "This was one principal reason of the failure of past attempts to spiritualise mankind . . . They endeavoured to spiritualise at once the material man by a sort of rapid miracle." A spiritualist society has to be first deserved and then gradually achieved. Sri Aurobindo has a fairly clear idea of what a spiritual society

would be like. Its sociology would treat the individuals not as units of a social problem but as suffering souls willing to be free and to grow. The aim of its economics would be to give each man the highest possible freedom and joy of work according to his own nature and ability and not to create a huge machine of production. Its politics would discourage the cult of State forcing the individual to worship the State as his god and his larger self. All these conditions can be fulfilled only when a society like its spiritual individuals would live not in the ego but in its spirit. "The spirit is unity, a conscious and diversified oneness."

When a society can discover its spiritual foundation and power only then on it a durable civilisation and a sound culture can be developed. Whatever might be the ultimate nature of the foundation of civilisation and culture, there is hardly any difference between the materialist and the spiritualist regarding the contribution made by civilisation and the aim of culture. Broadly speaking, civilisation and culture are for making man more free and more perfect. Perfection and freedom have no limit. In other words, human progress, both ethically and aesthetically, is boundless. Optimistic and moral orientations are common to Marx's and Sri Aurobindo's thinking. Popper says, "Marx's condemnation of capitalism is fundamentally a moral condemnation."<sup>22</sup> Sri Aurobindo says, "Our idealism is always the most rightly human thing in us."

But one must remember that there is no law of progress or that this development does not take place as a matter of course. Progress and development made hitherto by human civilisations and cultures might exhibit on analysis and interpretation some general tendencies, but from that it would be wrong to think that our progress is *inevitable*. The doctrines of inevitability, religious and profane, belittle the role of the human agency in shaping the course of civilisation and in imparting a character to culture. The entire world of values is considerably impoverished by these indefensible doctrines.

Regarding the relative primacy of civilisation and culture the defenders of spiritualism and materialism, Sri Aurobindo and Marx, for example, have expressed their fundamental difference. Marx says, civilisation, the material conditions of life, provides the foundation stone or infrastructure of culture. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, thinks that culture, the consciousness-components of life, is the basis of choice and construction of the material aspects of civilisation. Somewhat similar view is expressed by MacIver when he says, "culture is what we are and civilisation is what we use", and the former is "the animating and creating spirit" of the latter.<sup>23</sup> In this context one feels tempted to recall Marx's criticism of Hegelian dialectic claiming that he has put matter-consciousness relation upside down. It is rather naive and trite to think that Hegel did not realise that matter influences consciousness or

that he wanted to make history rest and walk on head, i.e., consciousness. Similarly, it would be rather jejune to suggest, as it has been by Merleau-Ponty e.g., that Marx wanted to make history think by feet, i.e., by matter.<sup>24</sup> In fact Marx repeatedly speaks of interaction between matter and consciousness and the reverse effect of the superstructure, the products of consciousness, on the infrastructure, the material conditions of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo also speaks of the twin movements of ascent and descent between the material base of consciousness and the more evolved and higher levels of consciousness.

However, the similarity between them on some points should not make us blind to their fundamental difference. Their accounts of social dynamics are different. Their value-schedules are different. Also they differ on how to establish a just and beautiful society and to realise the ideal of human unity.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> HC, p. 90.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Unwin University Books, London, 1970, p. 72.
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 158-59.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 172.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 170-71.
- <sup>6</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, London, 1957.
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 44-46.
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 132.
- <sup>9</sup> HC, p. 118.
- <sup>10</sup> E. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, p. 92.
- <sup>11</sup> *A History of Political Theory*, Vol. I, p. 43.
- <sup>12</sup> *A Study of History*, abridged by Somervell, p. 183.
- <sup>13</sup> HC, p. 120.
- <sup>14</sup> T. H. Green, *Principles of Political Obligations*, p. 26.
- <sup>15</sup> *Negations*, Penguin, 1968, Ch. III.
- <sup>16</sup> *LD*, Birth Centenary Library, 1970, Vol. 18, p. 23.
- <sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 24.
- <sup>18</sup> *The Renaissance in India*, Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 14, pp. 401-04.
- <sup>19</sup> HC, pp. 183-84.
- <sup>20</sup> HC, p. 168.
- <sup>21</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, Free Press, New York, 1967, p. 252.
- <sup>22</sup> Collingwood, *Principles of Art*, Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 286-7.
- <sup>23</sup> *The Future Poetry*, Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 9, p. 243.
- <sup>24</sup> HC, pp. 171-72.
- <sup>25</sup> Christopher Caudwell, *Further Studies in a Dying Culture*, p. 106.
- <sup>26</sup> Gustav A. Wetter, *Soviet Ideology Today*, London, 1966.
- <sup>27</sup> Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God*, Routledge, Kegan and Paul, London, 1964, Ch. V.
- <sup>28</sup> Alvin W. Gouldner, "Anti-Minotaur: The Myth of a Value-free Sociology", in Jack D. Douglas (ed.), *The Relevance of Sociology*, New York, 1970, pp. 64-84.
- <sup>29</sup> K. Gilbert and H. Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, pp. 392-93.
- <sup>30</sup> HC, p. 95.
- <sup>31</sup> P. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, Volume III, p. 535.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. II, p. 199.
- <sup>33</sup> *The Modern State*, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 325.
- <sup>34</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge, Kegan and Paul, London 1970, p. XIX; see also his *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Heinemann, London, 1974.

# Science and Contemporary Philosophy of Science in India

DALE RIEPE

## *Introduction*

MUCH important scientific activity took place in India before the British Raj. O. P. Jaggi has given us an account of scientific and technological development in India from the time of the vedic literature.<sup>1</sup>

Just prior to the British arrival, Sewai Jai Singh constructed a number of observatories in the eighteenth century and sent emissaries to all parts of the world before he embarked on the tasks of compiling *Zij-Muhammed Shehi*, his treatise on astronomy. One emissary brought back tables of Walter de la Hire, but the works of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton were overlooked as was the telescope.<sup>2</sup>

The Madrasa at Calcutta was founded by Governor-General Warren Hastings in 1781 and the Hindu College at Banaras in 1791, with little or no emphasis placed upon science. But by 1882 there were three institutions for medicine and three for engineering in India. Out of a total of 16,000 students in 1892, there were 1,950 students studying law, 800 medicine, and 500 engineering. The first science department at Baroda College of the University of Bombay was established in 1881, while the first science department at Calcutta University was begun in 1915. Elsewhere there was a school for surveying, established in Madras in 1793, and a Trigonometrical Survey of the Peninsula of India begun in 1800. In 1788 Botanical Gardens were founded in Calcutta, followed by the Botanical Survey of India the next year. Despite these salutary beginnings, it is only necessary to compare the development of Japanese science during the same period to realize graphically how little science was being pursued in an advanced civilization prevented by circumstances from coming out of its medieval sloth or prevented by the indifference and outright opposition of the British. The Meiji government of 1868 controlled the unprecedented (before socialism) develop-

ment of Japanese science and technology since there was so little capital in private hands. This did not prevent the *Zaibatsu* from being encouraged, but that is another story. The Japanese experience in the development of science is markedly different from the Indian for such reasons as that Japan's ruling-class faced the challenge of Western technology as if it were a matter of life and death. Once it had decided upon a plan, Japan never quit until it had mastered science and technology, to be brought about by enormous expenditures on education, until then unique in history.<sup>3</sup> The diffuseness of India's ruling-class was a major problem for Indian development, even if that class had agreed that science and technology were of the greatest immediate importance. The spiritualistic soothsaying of the Hindu and Muslim revivalists could have been ignored, but was not, to the constant detriment of Indian scientific development. Then, as today, the ruling-class finds it convenient, as E. M. S. Namboodiripad has documented many times, to make political alliance with reaction and obscurantism even if the country should suffer thereby. Nevertheless, Japan and India did have some common characteristics during the first period of modern scientific development, including population explosion, resistance to agricultural rationalization, slowness of the worker to effectively adopt technological inventions such as power, resistance to standardization required by capitalist production, and inadequate warehousing facilities.<sup>4</sup> I am not recommending that the worker should have reacted otherwise. In the light of what he knew, his feet-dragging reaction was perfectly rational. In comparing the Indian with the Japanese, the Japanese proved superior in centralization, combining large with small scale production, controlling raw materials coming in from abroad, compactness of land communication, uniformity of cultural patterns, the existence of one language. India had the disadvantage of British Rule, but the advantages of a large railway system, a large body of skilled workmen, and above all, enormous natural resources. •

One of the first notable Indian scientists before Independence was Haffkine, a student of Pasteur at the end of the nineteenth century, who developed plague vaccine and established the laboratory in Bombay which later developed into the Institute which today bears his name. Agriculture research began in 1905 in Bihar, but industrial research was not established until the first World War.

Founded in Calcutta in 1784, the first learned society devoted largely to science was the Royal Asiatic Society. The first scientific journal was *Asiatic Researches* (1799) begun by the Asiatic Society of Bengal also located in Calcutta. (When I joined the society in 1967, its offices were at Park Street near Chowringhee.) By 1900 there were thirty-two such journals which increased to 103 by the end of 1940.

### *Indian Science and Extension of British Science*

According to Abdul Rahman, Indian science "was primarily an extension of British science . . . and was at first limited to British personnel, but slowly and gradually the number of Indian participants increased and assumed responsibility both in departments as well as in societies and their publications."<sup>5</sup> As Indians participated more and more in the scientific enterprise, they created pressure to extend scientific education and research; national needs, requirements and aspirations also began to play a greater role in the evolution of policies and the growth of science. Rahman notes that the peculiar effects of British-introduced-and-controlled science continued even after Independence. These effects were: *first*, that science was not commensurate with the size and population of the country; *second*, since the teaching was in English, that it was limited to a small nucleus of people while the vast majority of Indians still were immersed in traditional and medieval learning; *third*, science teaching facilities were extremely limited, so that the separation of hand and brain occurred [and continued] because it was seen merely as another academic discipline; *fourth*, the link of science with industry was weak because of the foregoing, and consequently, the government policy was itself based on ignorance and scarcely aware of the needs of a scientifically based Indian Independence; and *finally*, because of the paucity of facilities and trained scientific cadre, foreign experts, consultants, know-how, and equipment has to be imported.<sup>6</sup> No genius is required to notice that in such a slow-moving development, science would scarcely generate great interest in the philosophy or history of science—or indeed in the science of science or the sociology of science. Indeed these latter were scarcely taken up seriously until the end of the Second World War by the most scientifically advanced countries.

### *Origin of the Philosophy of Science*

Interest in the philosophy and history of science was generated by scholars concerned with both science and empirical philosophy. Several noteworthy, and by now classical exceptions, to this rule were W. Whewell's *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840), the *Dialectics of Nature*, written by Engels in 1895, but made available only in 1940 for English readers in the translation by Clemens Dutt, and V. I. Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* published in 1920. Appearing the same year was the forerunner of all later work in the philosophy of biology, namely the *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* by Claude Bernard. From that time onwards, there were fugitive attempts to lay out the broad framework of the philosophy of science, yet they were dominated by a passion for analyzing the methods of the physical or natural sciences. Consequently the history and

philosophy of physics and astronomy in relation to methodology have been seen as having overriding importance.

Just when philosophy of science begins in the West can be answered only within the framework of what one means by philosophy of science. J. J. Kockelman begins his work by discussing Kant's contributions.<sup>7</sup> For Marx Wartofsky, philosophy of science seems to have appeared in Greek times since he treats the subject as a history of numerous problems such as laws, theories, induction, causality, explanation, and son on.<sup>8</sup>

### *Beginnings of the Philosophy of Science in India*

It was not until the Second World War, that the totality of interrelationships among the science was pointed out in a sophisticated way by J. D. Bernal in his epochmaking *The Social Function of Science* (1939), to be followed by his even more important *Science in History* (1954), second edition (1956), third edition (1968), since the latter work includes the discoveries and generalizations of the former. The Unity of Science movement begun by the logical positivists and logical empiricists was another contribution to awareness of philosophy of science and some of its special problems. However, in keeping with the general outlook of the contemporary positivists, the Unity of Science was presented in a piecemeal fashion in a series of small monographs, Vol. I being *Encyclopedia and Unified Science*, ed. by Neurath, Bohr, Dewey, Russell, Carnap and Morris.

The earliest efforts to inquire into, and give a cogent account of scientific development in India, like those of B. N. Seal<sup>9</sup> and P. C. Ray<sup>10</sup> were not as broad in scope as one would like. Many if not most of the studies since their work, have a bias in favor of science divorced from technology which has also been the trend in the West. There is a trend in Indian science that is almost meditational and revelational according to Rahman, by which he implies activity of the mind divorced from activity of the hands. The interrelationship between the scientific and technological tradition in India has not only not been studied, but its wider effects were not even considered until a few years ago. Ultimately, the great tradition of Indian technology and crafts will have to be incorporated into the history and philosophy of science.

### *Some Difficulties in Developing Science and Philosophy of Science in India*

Professor R. S. Gill, who first introduced the philosophy of science at Panjab University Camp College in 1954 and then introduced philosophy of science at Delhi University at the invitation of Vice-Chancellor C. D. Deshmukh, assessed the difficulty of introducing philosophy of science. Gill, who had retired from teaching, was sought out in 1961 to begin the paper



in Philosophy of Science at Delhi University, the same year that Panjab University Camp College abandoned the course. According to Gill, the major reason why philosophy of science has scarcely been introduced into the philosophy curriculum (or any other) is that traditionalism has such a tremendous grip on the Indian Universities which enables them, as he put it: "to march forward looking back."<sup>11</sup> He told me that this traditionalism comes from the philosophy of the Gītā which was "pounded and washed into us", through the principle of *nishkam* or disinterestedness. "How can anyone achieve anything by being disinterested?" Gill asked me in New Delhi in 1967. He added: "We are told to close our eyes to results, a stupid rule if there ever was one." Indian philosophy students are filled with *nishkam* according to Gill. What is needed he said:

. . . not only among its philosophers, is the sense of ratio of output to input, and attempt to maximize efficiency. In order to get that we cannot keep our eyes shut to results as the Gītā recommends.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime Abdul Rahman voices his complaint that even teachers of science are usually pencil-and-paper scientists, but this is quite often true in the West as well. The actual preparation of some of these "scientists" is close to being merely literary. Behind this lackadaisical approach to philosophy of science and science itself stands Indian society and particularly the Indian Government controlled by the Congress Party. It is the view of Rahman, N. Sen, and N. R. Rajagopal that:

First, Indian expenditure on scientific research in terms of percentage of national income, of government expenditure and of the capital investment is negligible. It does not even compare well with the small countries of Europe with a population of a few million. In terms of the total requirements of the country, as laid down by the [stated] objectives of the various plans, the investment in scientific research is also inadequate.<sup>13</sup>

Although such a science policy can be recommended from the point of view of the practices of certain other capitalist countries which spend from sixty to ninety per cent of their national budgets on military-related matters and hardware,<sup>14</sup> the indolence in non-military affairs is disheartening, particularly in scientific agriculture which requires not only an agronomical solution but a political one as well. Bernal said some years ago and repeated recently before his death:

The growth of science in the [advanced] capitalist world in the last few years has been phenomenal, but it has been at the expense of various distortions of aim and method.<sup>15</sup>

This would be true even if we credit military research for biological, aeronautical and space spinoffs, such as radar. But Rahman *et al.* continues:



Second, in the allocation as it is now being made to institutions, the major emphasis is on the institutional requirements rather than the requirements of different fields of specialization of scientific research. Consequently a picture of investment in different fields of science in relation to the national requirements and the growth of science is not possible.<sup>16</sup>

National requirements cannot be given priority because this would imply that the scientists themselves, instead of corporations and their politicians, decided what the national aims were to be. Under capitalism, the national aims are ultimately set by the large corporations. This, of course, is the Achilles heel of all the Indian five-year plans. It should be remembered that despite the tremendous material gains of Japan from 1868 to 1931, corporation adventurism led by the Zaibatsu resulted in Japan's defeat and collapse in 1946. Since that time Japan has been a pawn of international corporate will and has been forced into the role as buffer against the rise of socialism in Eastern Asia, with incomplete success. What India's international role is to be in relation to China, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., not to speak of the Common Market and the Warsaw Pact Powers, is quite unclear.

Having stated their second point, we now turn to the third made by Rahman *et al.*:

Thirdly, more provision has to be made for capital investment in research to meet the requirements of equipment, library and other facilities than has hitherto been made, particularly in view of the heavy increase in cost of the new and sophisticated equipment and the need for modernizing facilities.<sup>17</sup>

It is difficult to know whether the relative indifference to science is calculated by the Congress Party leaders and its conservative advisers. Perhaps it is a shared indifference as a result of the prevailing social ideology and that it cannot, except for sudden conversion or a great enlightenment be irradiated. The idealistic struggle in Indian philosophy, and to a lesser extent in Indian social science, religion and education (with few exceptions), appears to insure irrationalism. An outstanding example of this is to be seen in the writings and teaching of Sri Aurobindo whose influence among intellectuals who should be more critical has been and still is uncommonly great. We turn briefly to this topic.

### *Sri Aurobindo as Obscurantist and Fighter Against Science*

Among Sri Aurobindo's admirers are always some who seldom grow tired of speaking about his strong scientific background and interests. On examination we find that nothing could be further from the truth. His work demonstrates a consistent litany of scorn, if not hatred, for the scientific

enterprise. That he is a revivalist, fideist, and idealist no one can doubt who has read his popular books. What he says in his *Letters*, however, is less well-known and indicates in a more intimate way his attitude towards science and his hatred of anything that smacks of naturalism or materialism. There are so many quotations that one could cite as evidence of this that the sheer wealth of material is an embarrassment. I shall try to choose only cardinal examples because, otherwise, this section would become unendurably long.

He says in a letter written November 18, 1934, at the height of his spiritual development:

. . . spiritual seeking has its own accumulated knowledge which does not depend in the least on the theories or discoveries of science in the purely physical sphere . . . [My] attempt like that of Jeans and others is a reaction against the illegitimate attempts of some scientific minds in the nineteenth century . . . who took advantage of the march of scientific discovery to discredit or abolish as far as possible the religious spirit and to discredit metaphysics as cloudy verbiage, exalting science as the only clue to the truth of the universe.<sup>18</sup>

In another letter he says:

. . . I think that attitude is now dead or moribund [whistling in the dark]; scientists recognise . . . the limits of their sphere. I may observe that the conflict between religion and science never arose in India (until the days of European education) because religion did not interfere with scientific discovery and scientists did not question religious or spiritual truth because the two things were kept on separate but not opposing lines.<sup>19</sup>

This alleged lack of conflict between religion and science or between theology and science, as the cautious A. D. White used to point out,<sup>20</sup> does not square with what M. N. Roy, himself no paragon of scientific thought, points out regarding science and Hinduism. Says Roy:

To have found the unity in diversity, is claimed as the greatest merit of Hindu philosophy. But, as a matter of fact, the unity was not found. It was simply assumed or imagined. It is an ideal conception which brushes aside the problems to be solved. Since the rise of the material world out of the assumed immaterial root-cause is not logically possible, dualism persists defying all metaphysical verbal jugglery.<sup>21</sup>

Roy fails to note the verbal jugglery perpetrated by dualism. R. G. Collingwood at Oxford tried to demonstrate that both religion and science have their respective spheres of influence, a view also claimed by Sri Aurobindo. Religion, he said, deals with the infinite and science with the finite. Therefore there can be no conflict. His next step is to equate the infinite with the Christian spiritual apparatus in his *Faith and Reason* (1948). Aurobindo

does not use this argument as such. But he does take Jeans and Eddington at face value as we shall see P. J. Chaudhury and Ruth Reyna also doing when they write on the philosophy of science. Jeans and Eddington revealed the new spirit resulting from the so-called "spiritualisation of matter", where matter, by some mysterious and inexplicable transmutation, becomes mind, consciousness, or spirit. They were not alone in this. Spiritualists sprang up in Europe, the United States, and Africa (followers of General Jan Smuts) who also found solace in these views which were subsequently refuted by L. Susan Stebbing in her *Philosophy and the Physicists* (1937). Aurobindo's reading in anti-spiritualist, critical literature was at most perfunctory while he was still a young political "radical". Even today in India, it is difficult enough to find critical works except in the relatively scarce radical bookshops that one could not imagine Aurobindo frequenting after conversion to all-out spiritualism. His knowledge of the struggle between science and religion was at best miniscule, especially as it referred to the Indian experience from Lokāyata onwards. Outstanding among Aurobindo's spiritual qualities are his abysmal ignorance of the history and development of science—or civilization for that matter. He says, for example, that there are periods in which there is a temporary rise of materialism. Such periods:

. . . came in Europe in the nineteenth century [and the 18th, the 17th, the 16th, etc.], but they are usually of short duration. Western Europe has already lost its faith in materialism and is seeking something else [not twenty years after this pronouncement, 37 per cent of the people of the globe were officially or unofficially allied to materialist philosophy], either turning back to old religions or groping for something new. Russia and Asia are now going through the same materialistic human development—to destroy the bondage of old forms and leave a field for new truth and new forms of truth and actions in life as well as for what is behind life.<sup>22</sup>

This glib chatter, based upon at best a shallow view of contemporary history, makes us aware of the lack of success revivalism has when it is faced by knowledge instead of ignorance. When Aurobindo wrote this letter in 1935, the amount of materialism in Europe had doubled and China was just about to carry its masses into the materialist orbit. He does recognize, nevertheless, at this time, that there is a "certain necessity in human development", in him a relatively healthy sign of historical idealism that echoes what Hegel said before 1830.

Like all religious devotees Aurobindo is concerned about free will versus determinism. In pursuing the problem of predeterminism, he says:

. . . behind visible events in the world, there is always a mass of invisible forces at work unknown to the outward minds of men.

have inward and outward minds?], and by Yoga (by going inward and establishing a conscious connection with the Cosmic Self and Force and forces), one can become conscious of these forces, intervene consciously in the play, and to some extent at least determine things in the result of the play.<sup>23</sup>

Since invisible forces cannot be known, being invisible, we are left with visible forces, which is precisely what scientific method points out. But, says Aurobindo:

All that has nothing to do with predetermination. On the contrary, one watches how things develop and gives all that to contradict a dictum of the great scientist [scientists are great, when they can be quoted for spiritual propaganda], C. V. Raman. Raman said once that all these scientific discoveries are only games of chance. Only when he says that scientific discoveries are games of chance, he is merely saying that human beings don't know how it works out. It is not rigid determinism, but it is not blind inconsistent Chance either.<sup>24</sup>

It is pitiable that Aurobindo has to paint C. V. Raman (1888—1970) with his obscurantist tar brush, but if Raman has fallen into the positivist pit (fashionable enough in his day among natural scientists) by denying that we know a real world in science, then Raman must take the consequences for this lapse just as Eddington and Jeans must. The last sentence of Aurobindo, concerning "Chance", gets us into the realm of rubberization of determinism. Instead of rigid, inconsistent determinism, we have flexible, malleable, tractile determinism, not simply "blind inconsistent Chance . . ." Yet, what does this imply other than that chains of determinism can be altered by other such chains? We are quite satisfied to have Sri Aurobindo admit that it is not mere chance.

Concerning "The Revolution in Science", which is the heading of one of his letters, Aurobindo shows his increasing resourcefulness in equipping his revivalist arsenal:

The defect in what X writes about Science seems to be that he is insisting vehemently on the idea that Science is still materialistic or at least that scientists, Jeans and Eddington excepted, are still fundamentally materialistic. This is not the fact. Most continental scientists have now renounced the idea that Science can explain the fundamentals of existence.<sup>25</sup>

Now, let's see where we are. Most scientists, it is alleged by X, still believe in materialism. Instead of proving this to be false by a scattering of citations, Aurobindo reduces it to ashes in the fashion we expect of philosophers who are in touch with the Cosmic Self. He quickly shifts ground, having left that notion dangling and turns to the idea that most continental scientists

[Aurobindo would have surprised many of us if he had known ten of them by name, when there are thousands to interview on this question], renounced the idea that science can explain the fundamentals of existence. If we take the fundamentals to be matter in motion, then it is up to Aurobindo to prove that most scientists renounce them. It is true that under the subjectivist and solipsistic influence of positivism, quite a number of scientists who wrote about it had doubts as to whether they were talking about ontological conditions or statistical events [for them statistics being *of nothing* since they were not about material reality!]. Whether even one per cent or ninety per cent had grave doubts we shall never know, since no survey were made at the time.

Let us continue with the same letter to get the full flavor of Aurobindo's knowledge of science:

They hold that Science is only concerned with process and not with fundamentals. [But process is fundamental, as even the early Buddhists and Heraclitus intuited.] They declare that it is not the business of Science nor is it within its means to decide anything about the great questions which concern philosophy and religion. This is the enormous change which the latest development of Science has brought about. Science itself nowadays is neither materialistic nor idealistic. The rock on which materialism was built [materialism is *the rock* upon which everything else was built] and which in the nineteenth century seemed unshakeable has now been shattered. [Where has it been shattered and by whom?] Materialism has now become a philosophical speculation just like any other theory [this view of theory is like Newton's uncomplimentary view of hypothesis—an unfounded metaphysical guess. Scientific theory is based on a truthful account of reality]; it cannot claim to found itself on a sort of infallible Biblical authority, based on the facts and conclusions of Science.

What is Aurobindo talking about? Certainly not about twentieth century science, but about speculation based on the vedas. And we can hardly object to his knowing so little about science, recognizing what a difficult time Indians have had to introduce it. But we can object to his writing as if he were conversant with it when what he knows is worse than knowing nothing, since it is all wrong. To continue with his soliloquy:

This change can be felt by one like myself who grew up in the hey-day of absolute rule of scientific materialism in the 19th century. [This certainly does not square with the history of the reception and spread of scientific views in the Bengal where Aurobindo grew up.] The way which had been almost entirely barred except by rebellion now lies wide open to spiritual truths, spiritual ideas [As if Bengal, the most enlightened part of India, was not choking in spirituality!].\*

It is interesting to note in passing that as Aurobindo was writing this letter, the Nazis in Germany were putting into practice the spiritual philosophy of Alfred Rosenberg—see his *Der Mythos Des 20 Jahrhunderts* (1935). Beyond the simplistic and narrow world of pathetic materialism, important events are stirring, Aurobindo tells us. He says:

'That is the real revolution. Mentalism is only a half-way house but mentalism and vitalism are now perfectly possible as hypotheses *based on the facts of existence* [my italics—DR], scientific facts as well as any others. [Are there non-scientific facts, marching along without their uniforms?] *The facts of Science do not compel one to take any particular philosophical direction* [my italics—DR]. They are now neutral and can even be used on one side or another though most scientists do not consider such a use admissible.

Well, who cares what most scientists think, as long as we are in touch with the Cosmic Self. Tyrants in history begin to sound modest next to the arrogant pronouncements of Sri Aurobindo, super-scientist. He has now contributed to science the doctrine of double facts to add to the doctrine of double-truth, the doctrine of double-self, the doctrine of double-reality, and the doctrine of double-talk.

At this juncture, as useful as Sir<sup>77</sup> James Jeans has been to Sri Aurobindo and spiritualists throughout the world, Jeans draws a sharp counterattack from Aurobindo when the British physicist suggests that life came into existence on earth by accident. Aurobindo warns us about such statements as "these are mere mental speculations [as opposed to physical speculations?] without any [material?] conclusiveness about them . . ." "Opposed to such mere surmise are *the facts* [scientific or non-scientific or unscientific] put forward by Aurobindo to wit: .

The material universe is only the facade of an immense building [larger than the Pentagon or the Merchandise Mart] which has other structures behind it [perhaps like the Rashtrapati Bhavan in relation to the Lok Sabha] and it is only if one knows the whole [like Sri Aurobindo] that one can have some knowledge of the truth of the material universe. There are vital, mental and spiritual ranges [like the Himalayas, Western or Eastern Ghats] behind which give the material its significance. If the earth is the only field of the spiritual evolution in matter [what?] . . . then it must be as a part of the total design. The idea that all the rest must be waste is a human idea [we hoped that it was not a divine idea] which would not trouble the vast Cosmic Spirit."<sup>78</sup>

Aurobindo can know this only because He Himself is the Vast Cosmic Spirit, for otherwise who can know what would trouble Him? As one moves from stage to stage, from range to range in that Great Himalaya in the Sky (in spiritual evolution), one gradually comes to "greater Consciousness" of a cosmic existence in which form, life, and mind no longer appear by accident [mind seems to be accidental in the coming into being of Aurobindo], but "find their significance". The two stages in which one is involved are first the "overmental" and second the "supermental". Only at the second stage can one understand the last full truth of existence and become truly aware of its significance, says Sri Aurobindo.<sup>30</sup> Considering the cosmic intelligence required to know all this, it is astonishing that Aurobindo could not even predict what The Mother wanted to have for lunch.

I wish now to quote some arresting statements from Aurobindo's illuminated writing to give the reader an even clearer idea of his outlook on the scientific method and enterprise:

- (1) About spiritualism, I think I can say this much for the present. It is quite possible for the dead or rather the departed—for they are not dead—who are still in regions near the earth to have communication with the living.<sup>31</sup> Comment: I take a rather favorable view of Aurobindo's proximity to totemism.
- (2) The case of astrology is fairly strong; a case seems to exist for Cheiromancy [palmistry] also.<sup>32</sup> Comment: no comment.
- (3) About polytheism, I certainly accept the truth of the many forms and personalities of the One which since the Vedic times have been the spiritual essence of Indian polytheism.<sup>33</sup> Comment: this makes it possible for him to think that he is Him.
- (4) Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is a Power, a God-head, for all nations have such a Devil supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being.<sup>34</sup> Comment: It must be exhausting to be constantly surrounded by invisible forces.
- (5) Psychicisation means the change of the lower nature bringing right vision into the mind, right impulse and feeling into the vital, right movement and habit into the physical—all turned towards the Divine, all based on love, adoration, bhakti—finally the vision and sense of the Mother everywhere in all as well as in the heart.<sup>35</sup> Comment: The combination of licentious prattle about love on the one hand with strictures against sexual relations on the other seems to find no particular country immune.
- (6) The Jivatman, spark-soul and psychic being are three different forms of the same reality and they must not be mixed up together, as that confuses the clearness of inner experience.<sup>36</sup> Comment: As



outer experience gets more unclear through the dismissal of science, the determination to get clear inner experience increases. See also Husserl and Heidegger.

- (7) If the psychic were liberated, free to act in its own way, there would not be all this stumbling in ignorance. But the psychic is covered by the ignorant mind.<sup>37</sup> Comment: The mind in its turn is inhibited by the body. If only we had not body! The theme song of this outlook could be the popular American song: "I Ain't Got Nobody!"
- (8) [Man] carries about with him an environmental consciousness (called by the Theosophists the Aura) into which they first enter.<sup>38</sup> Comment: Japanese prostitutes during the American occupation of Japan, complained that American men had a disgusting aura caused by consuming too many dairy products.
- (9) It is only if one enters into the Cosmic Consciousness that one begins to see the forces at work and the lines on which they work and get a glimpse of the Cosmic Self and the Cosmic Mind and Will.<sup>39</sup> Comment: It is not clear just how Sri Aurobindo reached this transcendent ability.
- (10) The spiritual mind is a mind which, in its fulness, is aware of the Self reflecting the Divine . . . when the mind is turned towards the Divine and Truth and feels and responds to that only or mainly, it can be called psychic Mind.<sup>40</sup>

As in the case of adepts, Aurobindo has synthesized his own private "science" including private psychology, private cosmology, private metaphysics, private anthropology, indeed in any "science" where he find confirmation for his ideas. Whereas psychoanalysis seems to explain by pulling outside forces inside, Aurobindo appears to pull the inward forces outside toward the supermental and divine.

Sri Aurobindo's treatment of sex is of particular interest because of his knowledge of Tantra and hence his awareness of its importance in the development of Indian ritual and thought. He says:

The sex-impulse is certainly the greatest force in the vital plane . . . if it can be sublimated and turned upwards, *ojas* is created which is a great help to the attainment of higher consciousness . . . sex . . . is a movement of general Nature seeking for its play.<sup>41</sup>

If sex is entirely controlled, says Aurobindo, then it can be turned into spiritual energy force—force even beyond productivity and artistic activity. Thrill in sex is "simply a gross distortion and degradation of the physical Ananda



which by the Yoga can establish itself in the body."<sup>42</sup> For supermental activity, one renounced indulgence in sex, although it is not so easy to stop having sex dreams, for, as Aurobindo admits:

I have heard it said that even very advanced Yogis get the dreams at least once in six months—I don't know how far it is true or what the Yogis themselves know about it.<sup>43</sup> But the sex-impressions in the heart can be got rid of long before the end of life [that is the end of life], and even the seed state in the subconscious which comes up in dreams, though sticky enough, is not quite irremovable as all that.<sup>44</sup>

If there are no dreams, discharge should not be fretted over because it may have "purely material causes, e.g., the pressure of undischarged urine or faecal matter near the bladder."<sup>45</sup> This is an unexpected admission, for it indicates that Aurobindo is not yet a total idealist, regarding urine and faecal matter as *māyā*. Nevertheless, he admonishes us, the main thing under such circumstances is to remain undisturbed. If he can remain undisturbed under such circumstances, he may as well remain undisturbed while having purely material venery. If one can gently pressure by will or force the physical subconscious in the dream-emission, then one can do it in intercourse—especially if he has the co-operation of a highly conscient and spiritual woman nearing union with the Cosmic Self. However, Aurobindo warns, if the subconscious is obstinate, then one must simply keep applying more pressure on it. Bit by bit sex-thoughts must be extruded and rejected by the mind by the higher vital, and finally by the environmental consciousness which is a "surrounding atmosphere which we carry about with us and by which we communicate with the universal forces" until sex-thoughts just dry up and blow away. A final warning to the leisure-class *brahmin* and *kshatriya*: "Inactivity is an atmosphere in which sex easily rises."<sup>46</sup> And of course this is why full-time spiritualists keep thinking about it, being occupied with unmateriality. Fortunately, Buddhists such as Chogyam Trungpa regard spirituality as a way of making ourselves comfortable, hence spirituality must be shunned according to him.<sup>47</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's fascinating view of science is certainly pre-Thalian or pre-Carakan. He has chosen to remain almost miraculously ignorant of the whole subject and its history, not to speak of its method and its hopes for the future. His reaction, however, is generally no more striking than that of other Indian revivalists whose words are taken with deadly seriousness by many literate people. One would be seriously mistaken if he thought that Indian professors of philosophy were unaffected by his idealistic and anti-scientific outlook. With such opinions having wide circulation it is easy to see that Indian science and philosophy of science still face some challenging obstacles.

*Philosophy of Science in India Today*

For this section, I have chosen certain representative figures who recently have contributed to studies in the philosophy of science. Such work is so uncommon that one does not have to pick and choose with great diffidence.

*Pravas Jivan Chaudhury*

Few Indian institutions of higher learning offer course work or papers in the Philosophy of Science. Since there is so little demand for textbooks and supplementary reading material, publication in this area is slight. One of the few books to appear under the rubric of philosophy of science is Pravas Jivan Chaudhury's *The Philosophy of Science*.<sup>48</sup> As is generally the case, Chaudhury's work is more concerned with physics than with science as a whole. This has meant, both in India and in the West, that philosophy of science is given a peculiar and distorted perspective, leaving out the chemical, biological, social science perspectives. One might speculate as to the reasons for this. Part of the reason is that physics is more accessible to the layman in popular works which require no laboratory work. It is a relatively "clean" science ever since mathematics became so enormously important to it. Chaudhury is not concerned with science as a whole, rarely mentioning that there are other areas of human interest besides physics and astronomy. Consequently he never raises any interesting questions about biology and social science. In the Introduction to his book, Chaudhury gives us a clue as to the kind of philosophy of science that he is likely to espouse. He here says:

. . . though the philosophy of science (including the history of methods of science) has been recognised to be a prominent branch of philosophy in the West, in India, the subject has not been taken up yet, owing perhaps to the predominantly metaphysical or esoteric bent of the oriental mind.

He gives us another clue to his presuppositions by stating that ". . . the present author holds . . . neither [a view] of radical positivism nor one of dogmatic idealism but one which may be termed rational empiricism."<sup>49</sup> On the same page he says that the function of the philosophy of science ". . . is to judge the very bases of science and a constructive scientific philosophy, and so, adopt the critical and intuitive method."<sup>50</sup> Philosophy of science, he continues, also means ". . . inductive metaphysics . . . philosophy of nature and not . . . spirit or . . . total experience."<sup>51</sup> Again, he says that ". . . philosophy of science [is] a critical reflection on science, and so, following a rather intuitive method instead of the inductive one [hence this] may give us more comprehensive philosophy."<sup>52</sup> Chaudhury maintains that the difference between deductive metaphysics, which must be rejected by philosophy of science, and inductive metaphysics, is that the latter is "self-corrective

and open to permanent control by facts."<sup>53</sup> We hope that Chaudhury is next going to tell us how we can determine what are the facts. His answer is not long in coming, but it is not meant to be a direct answer to this question. "Matter," says Chaudhury, "is an order of abstraction for which modern physics finds no adequate operational rules for verifying . . . and so, has banned it from the vocabulary of physics."<sup>54</sup> Ever since 1710, when Berkeley rushed *The Principle of Human Knowledge* into print to be in time to begin modern obscurantism, matter has been banned by idealists. Evidently, Berkeley himself had a touch of that "metaphysical and esoteric bent of the oriental mind."

At this point we must ask Chaudhury a question, so simple that it is almost embarrassing. This question is: Just what is matter an abstraction of? If there is an abstraction, then it is an abstraction of *something*. Now concerning the head of the Cheshire Cat: "The King's argument was that anything that had a head could be beheaded. The executioner's argument was that you couldn't cut off a head unless there was a body to cut it off from . . ."<sup>55</sup> So, if you have an abstraction from something, then there must be a something that the abstraction is from. Now, if Chaudhury dared answer this query, he would have to rewrite his entire philosophy of science; if he didn't dare, then I find no imperative, including politeness, to continue to read his philosophy of science since it turns out to be simply a form of subjective idealism which has been skilfully dealt with by L. Susan Stebbing in *Philosophy and the Physicists* (1937), and by Lenin before her in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1920). Using the Principle of Least Effort, pared out by Occam's Razor, I see no reason for refuting this view again. One can only repeat that if there are sensations or abstractions, that they are sensations or abstractions of *something*. Bluntly put, matter is not an abstraction at all, but that base from which abstractions are drawn. It is Chaudhury's non-thinking thought of matter which is an abstraction from matter. Matter is by no means an abstraction of his thought of matter. Some reader will say that it is unfair to pick on Chaudhury because he is rather naive, but I respond that philosophers of science both East and West are naive when they think that they can dispense with matter.

Chaudhury says that "science cannot be used to back up a materialistic thesis"<sup>56</sup> anymore than an idealist thesis. So, dropping between two stools, Chaudhury adopts the imaginary neutralism of positivism, since imagination is the weapon against reality as Jules de Gaultier pointed out. Furthermore, says Chaudhury, whose philosophy of science begins to look like an exercise in free-association, the new physics "cannot prove the physical universe to be non-mechanical and material,"<sup>57</sup> this, although he has just said that "Nature to science is a real objective entity, a solid reality to be faced, to be

exploited and fought at once."<sup>58</sup> But Chaudhury has already assumed that it is material if it is physical (non-mental) unless we postulate a third category (along with Popper, Lakatos, and Plato)—some neutrality, for which there is even less evidence than there is for the mental. Despite all this Chaudhurian confusion, he then goes on to say that perhaps there is:

. . . some less determined stratum of matter . . . in the cortex and acting as a *via media* between the two spheres, the free mind and the physically determined nature.<sup>59</sup>

He has just plopped us into the middle of Plato's third man argument, pointed out as an indissoluble mare's nest by Aristotle. For if you have a P connected to Q by an R, then you have P connected to R and Q connected to R and that in its turn gives you a new connection to explain and so *ad infinitum*. To avoid this needless paradox, one might just as well accept pre-established harmony.

One may justifiably suspect that philosophers like Chaudhury, indeed, all idealistic philosophers, are doing their level best to make science so inscrutable that everyone will turn, out of desperation, to theology for succor. Concerning this, I have attended conferences at which research scientists listened to philosophers of science hold forth, scratch their heads and say that if they had known that science was so difficult that they would have gone into basket-weaving. A major problem is that philosophy of science practitioners, both in India and the West, are reduced by their ineptitude, to talk about how painfully difficult if not impossible it is to do science, especially if, like simpletons, we are unable to accept the materialist view of the external world. The usual cry in the West is, after slogging around in the mire of positivism and neutralism sufficiently, "back to Kant!" That means that we admit that we can never know any material world, but are reduced to the contents of our consciousness.

Before dropping an examination of Chaudhury's confusions, I wish to set down his final word on philosophy of science which appears on the last two pages of his work, *The Philosophy of Science*. Says Chaudhury,

We conclude our deliberations, then, with a statement that though science and such philosophy as bases itself on its results, e.g., inductive metaphysics, cannot itself prove any idealistic or spiritual philosophy yet it is the expression of an attitude which is not ultimate but relative to a more ultimate attitude which comes over when the former is critically reflected upon.<sup>60</sup>

I shall stop here so as to break up this tortuous paragraph. Beginning again, The latter attitude is idealistic and directly shows itself to be more fundamental than the realistic one which is an assumed self-delusive mode of the self or spirit in its love of variety and sport.

We remember that Kumārila had said that God could not have created the universe, since it has no purpose. Bādarāyaṇa replied that God created the universe out of sheer *sport*. But Chaudhury continues:

The critical reflection is itself a sign of the spirit's becoming weary of the sport [note that Chaudhury, like Sri Aurobindo, knows the "mind" of the spirit] and its gradual coming back to its own from the lapsed state. [Chaudhury has now become the spirit's psychiatrist.] We thus find that science has as its logical and psychological basis, a realistic faith, but it leads and gives way to an idealistic one through a process of transcendental criticism that naturally follows it (the latter's) object. In this sense we may say that science is not antagonistic to idealism, but leads to it as all relativity does to the absolute.<sup>61</sup>

I leave to the reader to explain this mumbo-jumbo. When we disown the material world, we are forced to populate the vacuum with an imaginary world of weary spirit, lapsing into the transcendental.

### *Ruth Reyna*

Another philosopher in India working spasmodically in the area of philosophy of science is Ruth Reyna, who published *The Philosophy of Matter in the Atomic Era*.<sup>62</sup> There is no doubt that her intention is to tie together traditional Indian philosophy and certain strains in modern science. She believes that the way to do this is to point out the idealism in both. She says:

The idealistic urge in the scientific conception of the physical world is seen to arise out of the historical developments of science . . . [i]t is no small task to expound physical science in the frame of idealistic philosophy.<sup>63</sup>

Yes, indeed. One must agree that this is herculean. But she continues with admirable clarity:

The total point of this work is to testify to the idealistic validity of the Vedantic concept of *maya* as an explanation of the relationship between appearance and reality, in which the phenomenal world is held to be neither real nor unreal and at the cosmic level is non-existent.<sup>64</sup>

First, a logical point, if the phenomenal world is nonexistent at the cosmic level then it is nonexistent at every sub-level of the cosmos. Next, one is led to believe that Reyna shows great restraint and modesty in her use of the terms "testify to" rather than "to prove" or "to demonstrate". But there is no reason for this modesty which begins to appear less so when she states that "neither man nor philosophy rests content with the materialistic or the empiricistic explanation of the world."<sup>65</sup> I agree with her completely that

many of us are not content with the empiricistic non-explanation of the world, but must sharply disagree concerning her contention about the materialistic explanation. There are probably thousands of scientists and dozens of philosophers of science who accept the materialistic view—which simply contradicts her false assumption. One can understand why she might mistakenly think this about the materialistic explanation when one turns to her bibliography which includes Eddington, Jeans, and an array of idealistic philosopher-physicists from our old friend Pravas Jivan Chaudhury to von Weisacker, all members of the *Internationale Idealiste*. Reyna, in attempting to establish the thesis that the literature of contemporary science testified to the correctness of her idealistic thesis gives us no references or substantiation that:

The broadened [narrowed?] scope of particle physics and its resulting dematerialization of the atom has brought science to look upon phenomenal events in a double frame of negation—that the material world is neither real, nor, on the other hand, is it unreal. [Reyna wisely refrains from defining “reality”.] And although such negatory references cannot be found so literally stated in the writing of modern scientists, it can, beyond doubt [!] be inferred from their conclusions, as the present treatise fully demonstrates.”

Having herself postulated that matter is neither real nor unreal, Reyna then asks: just what is it? No one can say, she answers. By way of apology, she adds that “It is quite possible to say that the phenomenal world is neither real nor unreal without violating logic . . .” It depends upon how you define and interpret logic. If logic has an ontological base in the material world which it must have to deal with reality, then to say that the phenomenal world is neither real nor unreal is to violate logic.

Reyna now lays down another principle that gives us one more clue to her non-methodology. She says, by way of making it more palatable that matter is neither real nor unreal, that “. . . if we say what a thing is not, we know something about it in a positive way.” She gives no example of this nonsensical statement, so I shall supply one for her: Matter is not phlogiston. Now what is positive about that? If we say what a thing *is* do we say something about it in a negative way? That would seem to be parallel to maintaining that we say something positive when we say something negative. Like all subjective idealists, Reyna would like to crawl out of the designations discovered over three million years ago by mankind and retreat into the neutralistic “knowledge” of algae. Well, never mind, because she also says that:

. . . we have postulated that the world [things] has neither being nor non-being. It is, in other words, inexplicable. And that is just what science is presently saying.”

We still need to find some quotations from various scientists to prove that this is "what science is presently saying." She herself is unsatisfied with her own position, so a few sentences later states that the world is "an inexplicable 'force' ". One wants to say that her "world" is an inexplicable 'farce'. But what a fascinating suggestion—that something inexplicable *has force*. If it is inexplicable we cannot predicate anything of it! Really, Reyna is honor-bound to retract "inexplicable" and replace it by "almost inexplicable". Fair is fair. If we know one attribute of a thing then it is no longer inexplicable. Not satisfied with this logical, semantical, and ontological blunder, she then expands the inexplicable X as "an analytical apprehension". In other words, when I look at viruses through an electron microscope, the wiggly lines and shapes represent an "analytic apprehension", which is also what I get when I look through a telescope at the satellites of Jupiter. Since "apprehension" can mean either "perception" or "conception", I presume that she means "*perception*" of the almost inexplicable. So now the inexplicable is perceptible in addition to being a force. This inexplicable, perceptible force is, Reyna says next, "the substratum of reality." I must review the steps we have taken: the inexplicable, perceptible force serves as the substratum of reality? Now, what could she mean by such a statement or postulate which is self-contradictory? Well, she must mean that the world or universe is a substratum of reality—a layer of some kind of material holding up reality. But that merely adds to her confusion. First, she says that we have an inexplicable substratum which implies of course that we cannot know that it is a substratum which in addition to being a SUBSTRATUM also has the properties of being PERCEPTIBLE, of being FORCE. On top of this inexplicable something we also have a reality something held up by a layer of inexplicable substratum. Reyna tries to allay our uneasiness or risibility by saying:

We have but to turn to Buddhism, or to the Vedantic philosophers, especially of the scholastic era, to recognize that their explanation of the universe, lying latent for some twelve centuries [not lying latent, but rejected], is that which has been recaptured in modern science."

What an amazing and wondrous situation—this recapturing by science of the hoary truths of Buddhism and Vedānta. It just goes to show you! What on earth has science been doing all those centuries? According to Reyna, it has been stripping itself more and more of its unfortunate materialism, until it has discovered that reality is being held up by an immaterial, inexplicable force. As if to give us the strength and hope to go on, despite this devastating revelation, Reyna assures us that:



In claiming that the world is neither real nor unreal, the sages are far less naive in their outlook than it seems to us who measure sophistication in terms of semantics.<sup>71</sup>

Speak for yourself, madame. I find that this hardly fits my own case. I measure sophistication in terms of whether someone can separate reality from non-reality, the sheep from the goats, who knows that there is an external, independently existing material world. If a person bases his thought on material reality he need not base it on the sophistication of semantics, the last refuge of a muddle-head. Semantics, in any case, must rest upon ontology.

Reyna sallies next into the dark forest of the "Methodology of Negatory Metaphysics" with all the screeching denizens warning each other of her approach. She maintains that:

. . . a systematic use of negation that *absorbs realism* [my italics—DR—absorbs like cotton] and arrives at the residue of "no attribute" or *distinction-less-ness*. Negation in this sense is not negative in the meaning of "void", and is the only efficacious method of affirmation. In defense of this broad statement, I have to remark, that I do not see why words of affirmation should be considered descriptive of a greater real than words of so-called negation [they are not so-called] that when pushed to their furthest limit leave the real exhibited in its true character, intuitively known and unhampered by the limitations of the intellect.<sup>72</sup>

One must say to Reyna again: speak for yourself, speak for the limitations of your own intellect. Since I know the limitations of my own intellect and your Reyna-intellect, I depend upon science, which is objective and positive and not gibberish. You don't absorb realism by this method, you destroy realism. Then you find yourself wandering around in the great indistinct abyss of intuitions unable to describe anything. This is what happens to the intrepid person who shuns reality. To help Reyna get out of this *cul de sac*, the Chinese philosopher Chi-tsan (549-623) announced, says Reyna, the doctrine of double truth. There is truth in the common sense way and truth in the higher uncommon sense way. According to Reyna:

The man [or woman!] of meager development in scientific wisdom views the phenomenal as really *yu* [presumably the realist], that is, as having being or is existent, and knows nothing about *wu* [lucky fellow], or the non-existence of the world. . . . a higher sense of truth and a step forward in the progress toward a cosmic [comic?] realization.<sup>73</sup>

Evidently we are back with Sri Aurobindo, stepping into the cosmic. That we are always in the cosmic never seems to cross Reyna's mind which may be described as filled with *wu*. But she has more to tell us about *yu* and *wu*.



It is one-sided, she says, to say that all things are *yu* or *wu* because *yu* is really *wu*. This is the case because *yu* ceases to exist every moment, thus changing into *wu* [based on the doctrine of momentariness, a basic postulate of Buddhism]. Awareness of this state of affairs leads to the higher stage of the revelation that the world is neither *yu* or *wu* and can be talked about only in negative terms in which nothing can be affirmed. If the dicta of this Buddhist School were followed by science, the laws of matter in motion would not be written down or enunciated since the higher truth is that we can affirm nothing. But, if we try to apply this higher truth to science in a concrete way, we would have to rewrite such definitions as found on the first page of Newton's *The Mathematic Principles of Natural Philosophy* as follows:

Definition I. The quantity of matter is neither the measure of the same, arising from its density and bulk conjointly nor the absence of the same arising from its density and bulk conjointly nor the absence of the same arising from its density and bulk conjunctly."<sup>4</sup>

If Newton had written this, we would be disgusted. But let's take a more homely example:

### *A Pedagogic Dialogue*

(Ruth Reyna is at the market talking to the grocer)

*Reyna*: "How much are the mangoes?"

*Grocer*: "They are not two rupees."

*Reyna* (impatiently): "How much are they then?"

*Grocer*: "Since I don't wish to appear to be semantically sophisticated, I'll say that they are not three rupees."

*Reyna*: "Good, this demonstrates that negation is just as efficacious as affirmation. By the way, how much are the mangoes, really?"

*Grocer*: "They are not four rupees."

Clearly, negative attribution would be not only the death of science but of all meaningful communication. If Reyna wishes to pursue her Vedānta, her Ch'an, her Zen or whatever, no one can yet stop her. But there is no reason why she should intrude such irrationalism into the arena of philosophy of science. As L. Susan Stebbing has shown and Lenin seventeen years earlier, there is not the slightest reason to believe that matter has vanished or that idealism is true. According to Stebbing, there are two causes for the belief that materialism is untrue. She says:

Two main factors are responsible for the tendency of modern physicists to adopt some form of idealism. There is first the change in the

conception of matter; secondly, the change in the status assigned by many physicists to natural laws.<sup>76</sup>

There is a *change* in the conception of matter—more is known about it, but there is not the slightest evidence that matter or the physical has become any less substantial than it ever was. The very term “substance” and “substantial” depend upon this truth. According to the German physicist Karl Menger, “matter has an atomistic structure . . . or is at least composed of lumps.”<sup>77</sup> In the Einsteinian equation,  $E=mc^2$  which states that energy is equal to the mass times the velocity of light squared, it is assumed that the mass and energy are forms of matter. Matter has energy and matter has mass, otherwise there could be no *measurable* equivalence. Reyna would have us measure the absence of things. There is a mass of *something* and an energy of *something* which is open to being measured by the senses and this *something* is matter. We cannot lose matter by putting it into an equation. Does it make sense to say that physical equations express nothing about anything? That is what Reyna implies in her negative position. According to H. A. Lorentz (1853–1928), matter is the seat of electrical charges. If you ask, “What are those charges of?” the answer is that they are charges of something called matter.

Physics is the science of matter or energy in motion just as it always has been. It is not the science of negative attribution *wu*. It is certainly not a non-science of the inexplicable non-substratum of non-reality. The belief in materialism has one of its roots in the belief based on experience of matter in motion that there is a universality of laws in accordance with which material bodies behave. Another root is that matter is indestructible—this knowledge also based on mankind's long experience. Its operational meaning is codified in the first law of thermodynamics which no idealistic physicist has refuted.

In her “Apologia” at the end of her book which she should have entitled *The Impossibility of Science and the Disappearance of Matter*, Reyna states that “. . . the over-all governing postulates of physical science, strangely enough, can never be demonstrated or realized by finite mind.”<sup>78</sup> What we must do to get ourselves out of this dilemma [of her making], she says, is “. . . to look to cosmic consciousness as an *a priori* principle . . . from which we may validly derive the appearance of phenomena by syllogistic reasoning.”<sup>79</sup> This is hilarious. How can you *derive* appearances from cosmic consciousness by syllogistic reasoning? Appearances cannot be derived, they simply appear or don't appear. Our indefatigable guide, Ruth Reyna, is left in a solipsistic un-universe postulating unreality and then deducing from super-awareness the appearances that make up the subject-matter of science! Surely this calls for a heavy employment of Occam's Razor, and further

insistence on the Principle of Least Effort, not to speak of the role that simple sanity might play.

*Rajendra Prasad Pandey*

Our third and last philosopher, whose work impinges on the epistemological problems of science demonstrates a strong tendency in Indian philosophy today to attempt (unsuccessfully of course) to avoid making judgements about concrete content or even relatively concrete content, preferring to remain within the province of deductive systems. He is Rajendra Prasad Pandey, whose book *The Problem of Fact*,<sup>79</sup> is concerned with the problem of objectivity and subjectivity. It is his view that:

. . . the whole realm of Objectivity is . . . understandable . . . . It is perhaps therefore that some philosophers prefer to attach the notion of understandability to the meaning of words—a view which, we think, is not essentially different from ours.<sup>80</sup>

Pandey then quotes Bertrand Russell's view that "the only thing you can really understand . . . is a symbol, and to understand a symbol is to know what it stands for."<sup>81</sup> Knowing Russell's amplitude for perambulation, this may mean that the symbol stands for either a mental concept, a pseudo-material object, or a perception that may or may not be considered to reflect reality. Pandey's next observation concerns his belief that he has shown that "Subjectivity can be significant only as experience,"<sup>82</sup> which means, I take it, that subjectivity cannot be objective, hardly a sage remark. Contrasted to subjectivity is objectivity, the experience of a faculty which implies otherness. Otherness is absent from subjectivity, he says. Thinking in these terms, we can now understand that it "is because of non-otherness that Subjectivity *qua*<sup>83</sup> consciousness must be considered only as significant and not as meaningful."<sup>84</sup> Since one of the synonyms of "significant" is "meaningful" it is perplexing to guess what Pandey here has in mind. Yet, warns Pandey, yet—". . . the character of the otherness of Objectivity can be annihilated because it is relative to consciousness."<sup>85</sup> Again, one is hard pressed to make any sense out of this. Without taking a breath at this recondite remark, he goes on to say that the possibility of annihilation does not mean that Objectivity itself ceases to be. The reason for this, he says, is that Objectivity cannot be reduced to mere nothingness (as much as all idealists would like). What a relief! because we have just learned from Pandey that Objectivity *qua* otherness *can* be annihilated. Perhaps if we remove the *qua*, which is hanging on like a barnacle, it will give objectivity a slightly stronger grip on reality. Pandey appears to face this ticklish situation with well-merited caution, for he says:

Now here there is a very delicate point in metaphysics [in dialectics]: are we to regard the state of no Objectivity-as-otherness as the state

of nothingness? No! . . . because a state of nothingness is a state of no-experience and no-understanding while that of Subjectivity and Objectivity is one of experience, and experience and understanding respectively."<sup>8</sup>

Wait a moment, Sri Pandey! If no one is experiencing or understanding extra-galactic nebulae, does this mean that they disappear into nothingness? Worse luck for the astronomers trying to chart the stars in their courses!

But, says Pandey, "[b]efore taking up the case of nothingness"<sup>9</sup> for further consideration, let us consider again *experience* with respect to Subjectivity . . ." Righto. We are game. When we consider again experience with respect to subjectivity we conclude that experience as subjectivity is a state of infinite freedom"<sup>10</sup> where subject and freedom are the same. (To my way of thinking, Western subjectivists cannot hold a candle to the super-mundane flights of the Indian metaphysicians, nor can the Chinese for that matter.) Turning again to objectivity, which Pandey capitalizes as if it were a sacred word along with Subjectivity, we can discuss Objectivity-as-otherness and Objectivity-without-otherness. Taken as content, Objectivity or pure Objectivity is simply the state of Existence. But Existence is Subjectivity. It appears also that Subjectivity is undifferentiated being, completely other than nothingness. "Therefore," concludes Pandey, "nothingness is the unintelligible *par excellence*!"<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, he notes:

As we have already seen . . . the finitude"<sup>12</sup> of Objectivity *qua* otherness is nothing but its own creation; it is due to the confusion of mind with Subjectivity; the former treating itself as identical with the latter, which is responsible for the situation of otherness."<sup>13</sup>

Reading this should remind us that it is far safer to refrain at the start from kiting checks, than to get more and more confused in trying to cover them up in turn: running from Chase Manhattan to Imperial and from Imperial to Grindlays. Just so we now find Pandey busy keeping track of so many non-existences that he is likely to make a more serious blunder than his original one—which was to begin without the absolutely essential imprimatur of a material world. Think of thy presuppositions at the beginning, before the evil days come, and thou speakest consummate nonsense. But it is a marvel to follow him to the bitter and tragic end. He says:

So, Objectivity itself creates and removes its boundaries . . . when the boundary is removed, then what we have in knowledge is the undifferentiated"<sup>14</sup> infinite . . . [and hence] [t]o look for a meaning in a metaphysical statement . . . is simply absurd. However, metaphysics, in spite of its being unmeaningful, is an occasion of significant expression in language . . . [s]uch is the fate of Objectivity, and with it that of facts in metaphysics."<sup>15</sup>

At first it was "significance" that was not meaningful; now Pandey has added that metaphysics can be significant without being meaningful. All our wit can scarcely fathom this. Why is it my fate to collect virulently subjectivist books, both Indian and Western, that turn the natural and the real world into crapulous derangements? It must be the mysterious work of *karma*.

Indian philosophers of science, except the materialists, are all saying the same thing: that we cannot know the real world of material processes, and hence we must rely upon subjectivity. Most of them end up in solipsism, the ultimate home of idealism and subjectivity.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> History of Science and Technology in India, two volumes: Vol. I *Dawn of Indian Technology* (Delhi: Atma Ram & Sons, 1969); Vol. II *Dawn of Indian Science*, *ibid.* See also scattered references in George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, two volumes in five parts (Washington: Carnegie Institution: Williams and Wilkins, 1927-48).

<sup>2</sup> See Abdul Rahman, "Lecture IV: Impact of British Science on India" (New Delhi: Research Survey & Planning Organization, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> See Dale Riepe, "Selected Chronology of Recent Japanese Philosophy (1868-1963)," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. XV, Nos. 3-4 (July-October, 1965). See also William W. Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan* (Princeton: University Press, 1954), and Angus Maddison, *Economic Growth in Japan and the USSR* (New York: Norton, 1969).

<sup>4</sup> I am not here recommending that the worker should have reacted differently. In the light of what he knew, his feet-dragging was perfectly rational.

<sup>5</sup> Rahman, "Impact of British Science on India", p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Compare this with the situation in the United States at American Independence. Many of the settlers in New England were from economically and technologically advanced Elizabethan England and "[t]he motherland recognized the scientific merits of the gentlemen of New England, we can learn from the records of the Royal Society . . ." Dirk Struik, *Yankee Science in the Making* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948), p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> *Philosophy of Science: The Historical Background* (New York: Free Press, 1968).

<sup>8</sup> *Conceptual Foundations of Scientific Thought: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

<sup>9</sup> See his *The Positive Science of the Ancient Hindus* (London: Longmans, Green, 1915).

<sup>10</sup> *History of Chemistry in Ancient and Medieval India* (Calcutta: Indian Chemical Society, 1956). See also his *Autobiography of a Bengali Chemist* (Calcutta: Orient, 1958), one of the great autobiographies of a man of science. The above *History* contains a supplement of Sanskrit texts.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Professor R. S. Gill, New Delhi (April 6, 1967).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Rahman, Sen, and Rajagopal, "State Support to Scientific Research in India—An Analysis of Trends" (New Delhi: CSIR, 1966), p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> In 1953 Britain spent 80 per cent of its budget for military ends while in the same year the USA spent 90 per cent. See J. D. Bernal, *Science in History*, p. 806. Bernal praises India for resisting the tendencies of scientific concentration practiced in Britain and the USA, *ibid.*, p. 808.

<sup>15</sup> Rahman *et al.*, "State Support . . ." *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Also, Interview with Abdul Rahman, Poona (January 11, 1967).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Second Series) (Bombay: Aurobindo Circle, 1939), p. 572.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 572-3.

<sup>20</sup> In *A History of Warfare of Science with Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Appleton, 1910).

<sup>21</sup> *Materialism* (Calcutta: Renaissance, 1951), p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> *Letters*, *op. cit.*, pp. 571-2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 567.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 563-4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Letters* (First Series) (Bombay: Aurobindo Circle, 1947), pp. 399-400. Rosenberg, philosopher of the Nazi Party, like Aurobindo, points out the failure of materialism as opposed to the correctness of the views of Kant and Schopenhauer because the latter two hold to an "undogmatic" idealism. See *Der Mythos*, pp. 324ff.

<sup>27</sup> The British Crown appears to have a penchant for knightining idealists: Jeans, Ayer, Berlin, Popper, etc.

<sup>28</sup> *Letters* (Second Series), p. 400.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 402.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, (First Series), pp. 402-3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 403.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156. This notion hails back to the Earth Mother, to matriarchal times. See Robert Briffault, *The Mothers* (abridged) (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), who says "... the conception of Mother-Earth is far more obvious than that of Mother-Moon. Even far above the level of primitive culture Mother-Earth plays no part. Both in Vedic literature and Hindu religion we find no great Earth-Mother, which may be explained by the fact that the Hindu Aryans developed their high civilization without ever becoming agriculturalists. They established themselves in Northern India as warriors leaving agriculture to the native inhabitants, and despising it." p. 363. But Aurobindo could easily have picked her out of Bengali Tantra. The combination of material craftiness and other-worldliness that characterizes Sri Aurobindo is commonly found among the great mystics and psychics such as Meister, Eckhart, Plotinus, Gandhi, and Mary Baker Eddy. This combination of qualities may also be found in the succession of primitive magician, priest-pharaoh, priest-aristocrat, priest-merchant and so on.

<sup>36</sup> *Letters* (First Series), p. 144.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>41</sup> *Letters* (Second Series), p. 412. The ancient Taoists agree with this. See "Science, Magic, and Mystique of the Body", *Chinese Erotic Art*, ed. Michael Beurdeley (Rutland: Tuttle, 1969). The origin of the belief that Nature or God engages in play may have had its origin from the dialogue between Bādarāyaṇa and Kumārila. Kumārila said that God could not have created the universe because it has no purpose. Bādarāyaṇa replied that its purpose is sheer fun and games. See Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Atheism* (Calcutta: Manisha, 1969), pp. 224ff.

<sup>42</sup> *Letters* (Second Series), p. 414. These references to sex were written by Aurobindo when he was approaching his mid-sixties. It is doubtful whether Aurobindo discussed this with a yogi. This may have been caused by his being unable to find one. Dom Denys Rutledge in his *In Search of a Yogi* (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), claims to have searched throughout India for a yogi who had supernatural powers, but found only yogis bereft of natural ones.

<sup>43</sup> It is gratifying to learn that Aurobindo, in his low opinion of science, consistently fails even to interview one yogi on this interesting problem.

<sup>44</sup> *Letters* (Second Series), p. 418. Much depends on the muscles of the *dobhi*, from the Sanskrit *dhona* "to wash".

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 419-20. Taoist magicians take note!

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

<sup>47</sup> See *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1973), p. 25.

<sup>48</sup> (Calcutta: Progressive, 1955).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 3n.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> Lewis Carroll, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland", Chapt. VIII in *Logical Nonsense: The Works of Lewis Carroll* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1934), p. 122. According to the Sixth Patriarch, "Hui Neng has no means to cut off any thoughts," R. H. Blyth, *Oriental Humour* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1963), p. 93. This is because he cannot cut off the external world which is the source of sensations and abstractions.

- <sup>14</sup> *Philosophy of Science*, p. 172.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 181-2.
- <sup>20</sup> (Bombay: Asia, 1962).
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- <sup>32</sup> Sir Isaac Newton, *The Material Principle of Natural Philosophy* (New York: Daniel Adee, 1846), p. 1.
- <sup>33</sup> *Philosophy and the Physicists* (London: Methuen, 1937), p. 266. After having noted this Stebbing takes a neutralist position between idealism and materialism, unconscious of the implication of this—namely that she herself falls into subjectivism and idealism because she has no ontology. In this she followed the lead of Philipp Frank, but remained to the end considerably less knowledgeable than Frank in the history of science. Frank, on the other hand, had no use for idealists who claimed that modern physics gave new evidence for spiritualism or idealism. His tendency towards subjectivism may be seen in his statement: "Everything in the world that is describable through inter-subjective expressions is called "matter" by diamat [dialectical materialism]." "This is of course without ontological basis and hence could mean that idealistic and totally subjectivist utterances could be called "matter", Frank, *Modern Science and Its Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1949), p. 201. Although Frank is more sympathetic to histodiamat than Stebbing, who presumably knows very little about it, his interpretations of it turn it into a subjectivist philosophy.
- <sup>34</sup> See Albert Einstein: *Philosopher-Scientist*, ed. P. A. Schilpp (Evanston: Library of Living Philosophers, 1949), p. 470. This work should be read *ad libitum* because it is filled with humorous *aperçus* provided by many idealistic physicists.
- <sup>35</sup> *Philosophy of Matter*, p. 231.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* Let us be warned that when philosophers begin to speak of the "finite" that they are only opening the door to speak of the "infinite" which they regard as a *place*.
- <sup>37</sup> (Santiniketan: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, 1965).
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- <sup>39</sup> Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 4.
- <sup>40</sup> *Problem of Fact*, p. 151.
- <sup>41</sup> Pandey, like Daya Krishna and other Indian philosophers under the spell of British linguistic philosophy has evolved into a state of awareness of *quanness*.
- <sup>42</sup> *Problem of Fact*, p. 153.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- <sup>45</sup> Like focusing attention on the unforeseeable.
- <sup>46</sup> Leo C. Rosten defines "freedom" as to be without money. "Infinite freedom" would be an infinite extension of that.
- <sup>47</sup> *Problem of Fact*, p. 155.
- <sup>48</sup> R. G. Collingwood in *Faith and Reason* makes some sense until he introduces this unfortunate term with all its theological implications.
- <sup>49</sup> *Problem of Fact*, p. 156.
- <sup>50</sup> Idealists like to deal indiscreetly with the "undifferentiated", because, since it has no known qualities, either nothing or everything may be said about it. F. S. C. Northrop, the American comparative philosopher makes the "undifferentiated" one of the two basic elements in his study entitled *The Meeting of East and West* (1946).
- <sup>51</sup> *Problem of Fact*, p. 156.



# The Concept of Commitment: Some Clarifications

MARGARET CHATTERJI

EXCURSIONS into human genealogy bring surprises and this is no less the case with excursions into the genealogy of the words we use. Of words in current usage 'commitment' is one where the exercise may bear some dividends, at least by way of clarification. The extent to which the language of commitment was originally tied up with religious conversion may come as a surprise to those who assume its secular, if not political origin. A somewhat harsh passage addressed by John the Divine to the church members at Laodicea runs as follows: <sup>1</sup> ". . . I know all your ways; you are neither hot nor cold. But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." He means to say that there is no halfway house as far as religious belief is concerned. The man who is converted in the religious sense turns his back upon one way of life and adopts another. This 'adoption' involves subscription to a set of beliefs and the following of certain patterns of behaviour.<sup>2</sup> This way of understanding conversion can be traced through as far as Kierkegaard and beyond. In *Either/Or* Kierkegaard describes the difference between the hot, cold and the lukewarm in a way which has scarcely been done more clearly since. The man who lives at the aesthetic stage flits from moment to moment seeking happiness in one experience after another in the manner of Don Juan. In simple language one could say that he blows hot and cold. He is a spectator,<sup>3</sup> uninvolved, and so bound to boredom and disillusionment. This lack of involvement is not to be confused with detachment which itself depends on an *ascesis* of a rigorous kind. Kierkegaard's first stage, furthermore, carries with it a certain attitude to time. The 'aesthete' lives in the present and fails to relate himself either to the past or the future. The past may be taken in its dual sense of one's own individual past and also 'the past' of history. The aesthete is in the position of acquiring a past (in passing through a series of adventures) and yet having no inner understanding of what is happening to him.<sup>4</sup> In his absorption with his own



experiences he is naturally indifferent to tradition, to history as the record of social experience. Unrelated to the past in both these senses, the aesthete may be said to be rootless. To be unrelated to the future is an equally serious condition to be in, for this means being without hope. Each moment bears no promise of more. Indeed this may be the last time. Ironically in this state where all is possible and nothing actual man is most necessitated. This is so because the factors which determine mood are all outside the individual. The aesthete is lost in and to circumstance. He is unable to take a stand.

Kierkegaard explains taking a stand by highlighting the turning-point decisions which mark the leap from the aesthetic to the ethical and the leap from the ethical to the religious. These turning-point decisions are passionate experiences, highly subjective, and certainly ones which 'commit' one to definite styles of life, in the case of the ethical individual to a life of conformity to the moral law, and in the case of the religious man, to a life of dialogue with an obedience to the one transcendent Being, that is, God. No doubt Kierkegaard's understanding of commitment sets more store on encounter (in the Pauline manner) than on subscription to belief. This is because he was anxious to make his standpoint distinct from that of those contemporary churchmen for whom formal allegiance to a set of doctrines was equated with "being a Christian". Kierkegaard no doubt was concerned to advocate a religious way of life and that in the terms in which he understood it. But the ways in which his approach has nevertheless coloured secular understanding of commitment are worth attention. The 'uncommitted' man is the one who drifts, who is spectator rather than an actor. He does not make history, rather he is the passive object of historical process. He has no policy for the future and so takes no hand in shaping events. The 'committed' ideologue undergoes, presumably, a crisis of conscience analogous to the Kierkegaardian *metabasis eis allo genos*,<sup>4</sup> and in a mood of fervour he embraces a way of life which (again presumably) affects all he subsequently does.<sup>5</sup> In all these ways the Kierkegaardian leap bears some analogy to the activist's 'plunge'. Among the many differences (there is no need to spell them out here) is the fact that for Kierkegaard the life of faith was a solitary affair (a lone dialogue with transcendent Being) whereas the activist (not however the solitary rebel) joins with others of a like mind in attempting to bring about a new order. That the Messianic conception of a transformed society underwent a secularized sea-change in Marx's political eschatology is too well-known to need more than brief mention.

The different ways in which Kierkegaard and Marx reacted to Hegel have been the topic of a considerable corpus of twentieth century philosophical writing. Both men shared a common dislike of rationalist systems which seemed to steam-roller the individual. Both disliked the *Zeitgeist* and both

had a preference for concrete situations over abstract theory. Both made their starting-point the actual human condition rather than the requirements of pure reason. For both, strangely enough, the "uncommitted" individual is an object of pity rather than condemnation. Both wrote of alienation, Kierkegaard of alienation between man and God through sin, and Marx of alienation between man and man through inhuman economic relationships. For both Kierkegaard and Marx there was no vagueness about the remedy prescribed. For both, to shift to philosophers' language, 'to commit oneself', like 'to know', are incomplete expressions. One can only commit oneself to a particular way of life (and this for the religious man no less than for the serious revolutionary is spelt out in some detail) just as one can only know something. 'To be committed' is as meaningless as just 'to know'.

From the above it will be clear that the twentieth century has travelled some distance from the usages briefly sketched above and the new usages are unfortunately a lot less easy to give a content to than the old ones. The philosophers' dichotomy between speculative philosophy (represented by Hegel) and its opposite has developed in a multi-tracked manner. Kierkegaard and Marx reacted to Hegel in ways distinctively their own. A single speculative system can be countered not only by a non-speculative system but by another speculative system. Some would go further and say that to speak of 'system' at all is to admit speculation. For example, to extend the dialectical method to the history of societies, as Marx did, was certainly to employ speculation. But with the further development of anti-Hegelianism, thought and action came to be regarded in a dichotomous manner, a manner which in fact collapses on the least reflection (with the exception of the limit case of reflex action). This came about through an identification of thought with theory and action with practice. The action advocated by Marx was on the other hand highly informed with theory, the dialectic of social change, and even the rationalist system of Hegel bore certain practical implications as far as statecraft and property relations were concerned. But not all twentieth century intellectuals took the trouble to analyse terms like 'condition' and 'situation' with the care of Marx (or Dewey) and these are the terms which serve to show up the untenability of maintaining a dichotomy between thought and action in the context of a meaningful analysis of commitment.

Often another concept lay behind the discussion, although somewhat covertly, the concept of contemplation. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the complexities of living, especially industrial living along with its accompanying institutional frameworks, encouraged in certain quarters not only a devaluation of contemplation but a positive reaction against it. The need of the times seemed, and perhaps still seems to be for active tackling of the evils of social inequality, poverty and so forth. The anti-contemplation

advocates sometimes allied themselves with the anti-theory advocates, although contemplation and theory are by no means the same thing, for those who have gone in for contemplation in a rigorous sense have done so out of a sense of commitment and using techniques which could certainly be classified under 'actions'. In this country those who talked of commitment were in a peculiar position. They allied themselves against the contemplativists (including in this group followers of various godmen),<sup>a</sup> but invoked theory perhaps even more than their confrère ideologues in the west. They were reacting against two strands in the local culture, that which set a positive value on maintaining the status quo, and that which set a positive value on meditation (these are not the same). They moreover wanted to expose the class allegiance of those who advocated material austerity for others but prosperity for themselves. All these were, and still are, healthy reactions. But the time-lag in the use of terms appears in current usage of the word 'committed' to express all this, so much so that in 1974 to write or speak of a 'committed' man almost carries the same overtones as writing or speaking of a 'good' man. That this should have been possible has come about thanks to the divergent experiences of western countries and of India in the thirties and forties.

The thirties and forties saw the flourishing of totalitarian regimes in Europe and the collapse of two of these (Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy) during the Second World War. Many Nazis and Fascists, no doubt, were 'committed' to their respective ideologies in that they chose to join the parties concerned knowingly and of their own free will. Thousands of others however were caught up in the systems, hardly realizing what they were doing or what the consequences would be. In opposition to these regimes, especially in opposition to Franco's Spain, many men of good will became committed Stalinists. When Stalinism was exposed for what it was their disillusionment knew no bounds. Their god had failed. Talk of commitment *per se* therefore is more or less passé in the western democracies since the western experience has been that it all depends on what one is committed to, that one may need to be committed to something very different tomorrow, and that in any case what needs to be done in any particular situation cannot be found out through the mechanical application of a formula. Disillusionment in the third world has been of a different kind. It includes, for example, disillusionment with the persistence of colonial-style steel frames and value systems in the newly independent countries, failure to tackle seats of privilege because party power has to be maintained at all costs, inability of 'free' governments to control sectional interests, disenchantment with nationalisation, planning etc. as magic formulae for curing national ills—to mention only some of the elements.

The western experience then must be borne in mind in turning to a

searching critique of those who speak of commitment in an article written by Louis J. Halle in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* in the spring of 1973, the general tenor of which identifies 'commitment' with fanaticism. Halle detects two underlying assumptions made by the advocates of commitment, that political issues are issues of right and wrong, and that intellectuals are enlightened and can therefore distinguish the two. He could have added that as well as the belief that 'the others' are wrong there is often the belief that they are wicked. To mention this is to be reminded of the theological ancestry of this whole question, a matter with which we began. It would appear to follow from the two assumptions cited, by converse, that the 'uncommitted' man is tolerant (as against the intolerance of the committed man), that he does not simplify political issues into issues of right and wrong, and that he does not endow intellectuals with any special political wisdom. A little reflection will show that these do not actually 'follow' at all because the term 'uncommitted' covers not only one but many possibilities. The 'uncommitted' man (I use this customary parlance for the sake of argument although my own view is that it is unjustified) may not be tolerant but may be indifferent.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively he may be committed about some matters (in the sense of pursuing them with might and main) e.g. he may feel committed to reading one newspaper rather than another, and yet 'uncommitted' about political matters. Or about political matters he may take a definite line about certain things e.g. the iniquities of racism in South Africa and either an inconsistent line (say he condones Powellism in U.K.) or an 'indifferent' line about other political matters. The 'uncommitted' man may even be of the opinion that seemingly political issues need to be tackled at the socio-economic level only. In other words a man uncommitted to political ideology X may be committed to political ideology Y or to a non-political ideology. This by no means exhausts the possibilities.

Let us look at Halle's two assumptions more closely. First, that political issues are issues of right or wrong. Here it is clear that an uncommitted man (in the narrow connotation of 'not committed' to ideology X) may in a very definitive manner look at political issues as issues of right or wrong. The pacifist would be a case in point. Uncommitted to ideology X he is nonetheless strongly committed to his pacificism. Whether pacificism should be described as an ideology would take us into semantics. It may in fact often be the case that the man committed to ideology X will be *least* able to view political issues in terms of right or wrong. The criterion for him may well be "what the leader says is right", or "what the party says is right" or "what country A, B or C does is right". It may of course be objected that the criterion will still be that of right or wrong but that right and wrong are being interpreted not in a "formal" manner but in a "material" manner. The

point would then be that where political issues were at stake there would be only two options, one of which *should* be opted for and the other eschewed. Less technically, political choices are between black and white. Let us consider this further.

I may here mention a point made in an earlier paper of mine written on ethical perplexity.<sup>10</sup> The point is that whereas moral reflection may reveal a central territory of clear cases (where one can say that this is right and that is wrong) there are borderline cases where the question is that of more or less, of balancing of factors, where for example we say "It is better to do this rather than that". It may be that in political matters the clear case approach is even less called for than the 'weighing of alternatives' approach. Why this may be so is because of the magnitude of the imponderables. But this consciousness of imponderables and the difficulty of weighting them is precisely the thing which the 'committed' man may diagnose as political immaturity, bad faith and the rest. This is not to deny that there can be clear cases of right and wrong in politics. There may be disagreement over the choice of examples but let me essay one. It would be right for a democracy to protect its minorities. But whether it would be right to protect a particular minority or weaker section by *positive* discrimination, say, to the extent of encouraging it to perpetuate its backwardness or separateness, can be a matter of controversy, i.e., what would be right in the circumstances (or, as I have suggested, better rather than worse) could not be easily determined, and certainly not determined by quick reference to any mechanical formula or ideology. In fact phrases like 'advisable in the circumstances', 'best in the long run', 'feasible at the moment' come more easily to mind in the context of political issues. Often when the word 'wrong' is used in a political context another word can, without loss of clarity be substituted in its place. For example instead of saying "It would be wrong for an M.P. to vote against his party in a division" we can without loss of meaning, and even with some gain in clarity, say "It would be acting against the mandate given by his constituency for an M.P. to vote against his party in a division". What I am suggesting is that the naturalistic fallacy *should* be invoked in political thinking, lest the words right and wrong be used as vague terms of approbation and abuse. This is, needless to say, not to advocate the divorcing of morals and politics. It is to advocate a particular theory about the meaning of the terms we use.

The second of Halle's assumptions concerns the belief that intellectuals have a special knack in being able to distinguish between right and wrong in political issues. If what has been said above can be reiterated again, political situations are situations of complexity where determination of what is feasible and what is best in the circumstances requires knowledge of the facts along with that of the interests of all concerned. Now there is no doubt that the

word 'commitment' is a word utilised by the intellectuals (a vague term, but roughly designable as a sort of class, and as Gandhiji rightly said, therefore to be distinguished from the masses) and those intellectuals who utilise it perhaps annex commitment initially for themselves, thereafter claiming that others *ought* to be committed. If Halle is on the right track in affirming that those who talk of commitment assume that intellectuals are specially enlightened and can therefore distinguish between right and wrong (in politics) better than the unenlightened masses can we are on to something which does not only seem not to tally with the facts but which tallies ill with the political method and 'style' of democracy. That intellectuals should be in the vanguard of decision-making may have historically happened to be so, but it is no inevitable concomitant of the method of appeal to majority decision. In third world countries intellectuals tend to dominate at the bureaucratic level rather than elsewhere. In other words those whose natural role is against the establishment find themselves a part of it. It is this class in fact which is the most alienated from the masses and least able to speak on their behalf. Take the question of the drawing of a state boundary. The opinion of the intellectuals sitting in government offices or in the legislature may have no special weightage of wisdom over the opinions of the villagers in that particular area. Certainly we imagine that intellectuals *should* possess some kind of credentials as political (why not social and economic?) educators. But there is no *prima facie* case for this. As far as commitment is concerned, not political commitment but the step by step follow-through of the implications of earlier decisions, no one understands this better than the villager. To plant seeds is to be committed to seeing to their irrigation, weeding, protection from pests, harvesting of the crop and so forth. If political education is confined to the pointing out of a commitment to vote in a certain way every five years and this bears no tangible harvest an electorate cannot be blamed for retreating to the multiple commitments of individual and group interests.

To return to Halle. He diagnoses twentieth century advocacy of commitment as a call to abandon thought for action and as such stresses its dangers, if not its sinister possibilities. The paradox of this has been referred to earlier, that is the paradox of an abandonment of *thoughtful* and continued examination of the facts of the changing situation under the umbrella of a rationalist *thought*-system. It is not only the professional theoretician who runs the risk of being dubbed uncommitted, but the artist too has long been open to this kind of attack. Halle cites the example of Goethe studying minerals while Napoleon's troops were massing all round Weimar, and Wanda Landowska recording Scarlatti in 1940 with the Nazis nearing Paris. The artist's prime commitment is to his craft. Commitment to an ideology *may* result in a work of art, but it is more likely to result in propaganda. The



artist who in time of war defends his abstention from war service by saying that he personifies the culture which others are fighting to defend may be regarded by the majority as a parasite. If he is a *great* artist, however, his defence can by no means be written off as a symptom of parasitism. The intellectual who is not an artist is in no position to exhort the artist to be committed.<sup>11</sup> At the most he might (in terms of his own commitment) exhort the artist to widen the range of his communication so that what he expresses can reach the masses. But even this he is not strictly in a position to do, for a retreat from communication is itself a form of communication (cf. abstract painting, aleatory music and gimmicky poetry) and no one can dictate to the artist in which way he should communicate.

With this aside on the artist and his commitment let us return to the relation of thought and action and see if the word 'commitment' throws any light on the relation between the two. Kant's Copernican Revolution was in a sense the ancestor of the subsequent approaches which shared in common the belief that it is human activity which bestows meaning on the world. For Kant the activity was located in the formal and *a priori* functions of reason, both theoretical and practical; for Marx it was the ways in which men organize their economic relationships; for Husserl it was the multifarious intentional acts of consciousness, and for the existentialists it was the act of engagement. The history of science makes it clear that the relation of hypotheses to fact is not a mechanical one, and that actually hypothesis enters into the determination of fact. The situation is even more intricate when we turn to the relation between programme and policy and social reality. If physical facticity is a drag on many projects in the natural sciences it is human facticity (a shifting and changing affair) which can often be a drag on efforts to transform social reality for the better.<sup>12</sup> One could compare here Brunet's dilemma in Sartre's *The Iron in the Soul*<sup>13</sup> with the scientist's one. Brunet says: "It is true enough that I've got to work in the dark. But what alternative was there?—to do nothing?" The darkness is ignorance of what the others have done or will do. The scientist's dilemma is ignorance of other aspects of the system he is dealing with (to say nothing of other systems) e.g. how a particular pesticide will affect the ecological balance. An inelastic commitment to a particular policy in the face of contra-indications is as 'unscientific' as the adherence to a particular hypothesis in the face of negative instances. The variables in social situations (as against laboratory situations) involve many factors which cannot be controlled. Here of course we reach a point of controversy. The totalitarian will maintain not only that the factors can be controlled but that they *should* be controlled.

The partial perspective (in Karl Mannheim's phrase) which an ideology represents apparently provides a handy framework for decision-making, but

the utility of such a framework is increasingly questionable as soon as provisionality, openness, and especially, the various imponderables of a multiple society, are given due weightage. It is worth pointing out that even a partial perspective, e.g. secularism, does not 'entail' any particular policy for implementation. It might exclude (purely pragmatically, not logically) certain measures e.g. bribing one section of the community to perform hostile acts against another section. But it will not positively *entail* any particular measure any more than the general directives of the Constitution positively *entail* any particular legislative measure. As for the concept of 'total perspective' this seems to me only to have content as a regulative idea. Even, say, a planning authority, aiming at being as objective as possible, can never attain a total perspective, not only because of the magnitude of present unknown factors, but because of inherent ignorance of the future. The coordinates of space and time are inescapable. In this connection Pierre further makes an interesting suggestion, not to "eliminate the risks of temporality by clutching to guaranteed space, but rather to temporalize space . . . a scope, a domain which takes shape as I act upon it."<sup>14</sup> As it happens, the ideas that grow out of concrete situations as those concerned apply their minds to them, often show up the irrelevance of ideologies.<sup>15</sup> The man who finds a partial perspective unsatisfactory may do so not on the ground of personal vagary (in Dahrendorf's phrase) but because he believes that social engineering in a piecemeal manner<sup>16</sup> is likely to do *less harm* than monolithic changes according to an ideological blueprint. Such a man, so far from claiming a 'total perspective' recognises only too well the limits of our knowledge. It may well be that it is on the basis of a commitment to the integrating perspective of humanism that he holds back from anything that smacks of totalitarianism. But there is a difference between such ultimate commitment and the particular commitments which could be described as the 'break-up' of the ultimate commitment in terms of policy. Particular commitments need to be subject to a constant process of revision. Self-criticism and particular commitments stand or fall together. The political fanatic is the one who makes not only a partial perspective into an ultimate commitment but even a particular commitment becomes for him an ultimate commitment.

The question next arises whether there is any difference between individual and social commitment. Apart from questions like whether a concept such as that of 'conscience' can be extrapolated from the individual to the social level it seems pretty clear that a particular commitment at the social level will be a matter of policy, something which is the result of the push and pull of joint decision-making. A group can obviously be 'committed' to a particular course of action. For example a committee can be committed to producing a report by a certain date, in the sense that it is within their terms



of reference to do so: A public body can deny that it is committed to do XYZ and this on a variety of possible grounds, e.g. that there has been no legislation which prescribes it, or no public statement of intention to do so, and so forth. The interesting thing concerns the ways in which one commitment may be said to be tied up with others. A commitment to produce a report within a certain time need not be tied up with three-hourly sittings each day. A commitment by institution to increase the number of posts is however tied up with advertising the same in time. Failure to do so is not a failure of logical acumen but a matter of *mala fides*. The spelling out of what one is *not* committed to do (whether in the individual or group sense) brings in many questions concerning social dynamics. Let us take the case of a college Principal who denies that he is committed to forwarding the demands of the Karamchari Union in his institution to the higher authorities. A distinction will need to be made (as in the case of analysing individual ethical situations) between the standpoint of the agent and the spectator. We will take first the standpoint of the college Principal. Let us, for the sake of simplification, exclude the case of written legal obligations where commitment can be established through legal interpretation. Barring this, failure to admit a particular commitment may be taken to arise from a certain interpretation of interests (whether in response to a pressure group or not) including under this that it is within one's interests to adhere to *other* commitments. From the side of the other party in the dispute (the union workers are of course by no means 'spectators') the failure appears as evidence of *mala fides*. The situation shows up the relation of alienation between the two. Needless to say the concept of "not being committed to X or Y" by no means always involves alienation. Any particular commitment has delimited range of reference depending on the relationship concerned (a good example would be the sort of thing set out in insurance policies). The class of things one is not committed to may often be clearly specifiable, e.g. A, in marrying B is specifically not committed to marrying C, D, E etc. There are cases, however, where the self-limitation inherent in any particular commitment can become the shelter for *excuse*. For example, a government may maintain it is committed to the maintaining of law and order, but not to the provision of employment for all its citizens. This brings up the question whether it makes sense to say that one (whether individual or group) *ought* to be committed to XYZ. To take an example—it does make sense to say that "All nations ought to be committed to the resolution of disputes by peaceful means." In fact this brings out the point we have insisted on throughout, that "to be committed" *per se* is vacuous and that commitment is always to a certain course of action.

Let us next see whether the distinction between ultimate and particular commitment applies at the group level. One may well ask if an institution

can be 'committed' (in respect of having an ultimate commitment) in the sense in which an individual can. Can the style of an ecclesia be adopted, say, by a civil service or a judiciary? Even if it were possible there would still be the question whether it were desirable. Ultimate commitments are a matter for individual conscience or ecclesia/commune-type institutions. To speak of a judiciary, say, as being 'committed' (apart from the general sense in which everyone is supposed to do their duty as faithfully as they can and which would apply not only to the judiciary but to anyone whatsoever) is to confuse particular commitment with ultimate commitment, and this usually through the mediating agency of a partial perspective. In an authoritarian regime the call for commitment *per se* is invariably a call for conformism, a ruling out of the possibility that one might be mistaken. My main objection against partial perspectives should now be clearer—that those who adopt them are usually unwilling to recognise their partiality. No doubt when the partiality is recognised, this kind of 'speculative instrument' (for this is what it is) can unlock some doors. The snag, in my view, is the temptation to regard a partial perspective as a master key, and the temptation is almost irresistible.

Let us see whence we have come. 'Commitment' is a relatively new word in western social thinking, although we had no difficulty in tracing the idea back in time in the context variously of religious conversion, the ethic of the revolutionary, existentialist engagement, and decision-making in general. The quest of meaning in action is an objective which unites the Marxist, the pragmatist, the existentialist and the *karma yogin*. There is a risk, however, in over-philosophizing about the issue. The man escaping from a concentration camp, the commune member doing his stint with the washing-up, the sculptor chiselling his stone, the wakeful parent tending a sick child, the toddler at play—all find meaning in action. The actions even in this small list of examples are very diverse. The commitments involved are likewise very diverse. There would be no sense in saying to any of the individuals concerned that they "*should be committed*" *per se*. A man can only be committed to *something*. We then noticed the difference between ultimate and particular commitments and the role of partial perspectives. One major question remains, whether there can be 'reasons for' ultimate commitments.

This question has been discussed at length in the considerable literature on humanism which has appeared in recent years. The ground for heart-searching has been the suspicion that those who appealed to ultimate commitments were appealing to something irrational and that the rationality of a standpoint could be measured by the reasons given for holding it. Here we run into a difficulty. For while it is the mark of a particular commitment that reasons can be given for it (indeed a particular social commitment can

only be embarked on as the terminus of a round of argument) ultimate commitments seem to be like logical stoppers or verificatory termini—either one sees or one does not see. One of the basic differences, for example, between the authoritarian and the liberal is that the latter thinks on the one hand that certain freedoms are to be preserved at all costs (even, say, the cost of inefficiency), and on the other hand that outside the spheres of the pure sciences and the verification of simple sentences like "There is an elephant in the front garden" most questions about human affairs are susceptible of a whole range of answers. Does being rational always involve the ability to give reasons? Yes, if among 'reasons' we include appeal to attitude, belief and standpoint. This, no doubt, leads to a certain regress. But to be able to identify and articulate the grounds of ultimate commitment is the prerequisite of any dialogue between men holding different ultimate commitments. The dialogue may even reveal a community of ultimate commitment at certain points. The greater part of our disagreements concern ways and means of attaining certain objectives, especially in the area of socio-economic thinking. The particular commitments we may make along the line are, or should be, as tentative as the scientist's temporary try-out of particular hypotheses. The only criterion in both cases is their practical utility.

This may seem too lukewarm a position to have reached about a concept wielded with vigour by many as a way of distinguishing between good guys and bad guys. It should be evident by now that in some uses of 'committed' Cenghis Khan and Al Capone qualify no less than Albert Schweitzer and Mother Theresa. It is such uses of 'committed' that I have excluded as vacuous. I have also tried to uncover uses of the word where dogmatism and fanaticism are smuggled in by the back door. We need to commit the naturalistic fallacy again and again in order for our commitments to have any identifiable content. That content in turn needs to be subject to a constant process of criticism. As ultimate commitment one might suggest the following:

- (1) It matters what one does
- (2) One should as far as possible act knowingly (not unthinkingly)
- (3) Knowledge (the utilitarian assessment of the situation) needs to be supplemented by compassion
- (4) Actions should be shaped by reference to the common weal.

Spelling this out in terms of particular commitments is a matter of the collective pooling of wisdom, devotion and work of a particular community. It is not a matter of any great difficulty to give intellectual assent to the four points mentioned above. But as Dag Hammarskjöld once remarked: "The great commitment is so much easier than the ordinary everyday one—and can all too easily shut our hearts to the latter."

## CONCEPT OF COMMITMENT

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> *Revelations*, ch. 3, v. 16.
- <sup>2</sup> Believing, saying and doing are all bound up with commitment. To what extent they can be said to be criteria of commitment needs further exploration. Vide in this connection my paper on "Gandhi's concept of man and society—a discussion of three aspects", *Anviksiki*, B.H.U., Vol. II, Sec. 3 & 4, July and October, 1969.
- <sup>3</sup> The words 'aesthete' and 'spectator' have a common root.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. St. Augustine's inner understanding of his own past history, after his conversion.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*.
- <sup>6</sup> The gap between profession and practice can occur both in the case of the adherent of a religious way of life and the man who subscribes to a secular ideology.
- <sup>7</sup> Notably in some of the third world countries.
- <sup>8</sup> To use a term coined by Peter Brent.
- <sup>9</sup> It is precisely this sort of uncommittedness which arouses the ire of the ideologue, an attitude which seems to the latter to involve conservatism in politics and a policy of *laissez faire* in economics.
- <sup>10</sup> *Journal of the Indian Academy of Philosophy*, 1966.
- <sup>11</sup> One of the things that existentialists stress (following Nietzsche) is the *creativity* of action. The snag is that authenticity as a criterion of ethical action offers no way of discriminating between creative and destructive action.
- <sup>12</sup> Social change can be for the better or for the worse.
- <sup>13</sup> Penguin Edition, p. 289.
- <sup>14</sup> *Educacao-e-Vida*, 1966, pp. 26-7.
- <sup>15</sup> Vide *The Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Paulo Freire.
- <sup>16</sup> The piecemeal social engineer meets his biggest challenge in the time factor. Vide Coretta Scott King: "For our children have only one life to live, one education to get, one chance of dignity and peace. That is why we need freedom now, not ten years hence. In ten years our own children will be well through their schooling."



## An Interview with Niharranjan Ray

PROFESSOR Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and Dr. Hitesranjan Sanyal are interviewing Professor Niharranjan Ray at the National Library, Calcutta, on 30 May, 1974.

*Professor Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya :* Professor Ray, to your readers and to the large number of those who had occasions to hold discussions with you, you give the decided impression of taking an absorbing interest in a very wide range of intellectual disciplines, both academic and professional. Indeed, one knows that your interests are almost encyclopaedic in character. Nevertheless one feels that there is an unifying principle behind this apparent diversity of interest. It may be helpful, I believe, for a better understanding and appreciation of what you have been seeking to do, if you could tell us about how you look at this unifying principle, or perhaps the gradual shaping of it during your long intellectual and academic career.

*Professor Niharranjan Ray :* I must try, even at the outset, to disabuse your mind of any idea of my scholastic and intellectual mastery of any of the fields you have just mentioned; indeed I have no such mastery. But you are perhaps right that I take a great deal of interest in a fairly good number of intellectual and professional disciplines. I cannot say how I came to acquire this wide range of intellectual interests since I do not seem to have cultivated it consciously, and hence not consistently and systematically. But if and when I look back which I do not usually do, I can perhaps analyze the process of its origin and evolution. This analysis is a very simple one.

In the Bengal of the second and third decades of this century when we grew up, that is, during my adolescent and formative years of age, the intellectual and emotional climate was still one of liberal humanism; the general orientation was, by and large, humanist, and whatever concerned man and his environs in the world which was nearest to us, interested us and seem to have fed and nourished us, both emotionally and intellectually. This general orientation was built up, slowly and steadily, by our great writers and thinkers of the last six decades of the nineteenth century, but so far as I was concerned, by Bankimchandra and Rabindranath into the rich tropical forest of whose writings I used to lose myself even when I was at school. Indeed, my

world of adolescent vision and imagination was reared up by these two great creative intellects, more particularly by Rabindranath. If I imbibed anything, consciously and deliberately and throughout my formative and mature life, I did so from the life and works of Rabindranath. It is his liberal humanist image that has helped to form the very lineaments of my being; his wide universal interest articulated in diverse creative directions, seems to have inspired me all through.

Besides, our family had a strong Brahmo background, and this background during the first three decades of this century, was deeply tinged by a decidedly humanist colour, protestant and yet liberal at the same time, and respectful towards universal cultural values which were derived from a very wide range of intellectual and emotional disciplines. I must confess that this background too, contributed towards the orientation of my being and becoming.

One must also take into account that during those adolescent and formative years, the intellectual figures in Bengal, which were our heroes, were those of personalities like Brajendranath Seal, Ramendrasundar Trivedi, Praphullachandra Ray, Jagadischandra Bose, Benoyendranath Sen, Rabindranarayan Ghosh and Jadunath Sarkar, for instance. A slightly younger group consisted of men like Satyendranath Bose, Meghnad Saha, Sunitikumar Chatterji and quite a few others. We knew that each one of them had his special field of serious study and investigation and yet each one was not only deeply interested in but drew his emotional and intellectual sustenance from a variety of fields of knowledge. Indeed, learning in those days was still considered to be intrinsically encyclopaedic in character and was still supposed to encompass everything that concerned man and his environs. I grew up and matured in the bright even-tide of that age in Bengal and could not help being deeply influenced by it.

If, therefore, you ask me of the unifying principle behind the diversity of emotional and intellectual interest that you see in me, I would say that this principle is the principle of liberal humanism which manifests itself, intellectually speaking, in an unceasing and encompassing interest in all that concerns man and his environs.

*Professor Chattopadhyaya* : What you have said certainly makes sense, historically speaking, but it seems that the liberal humanist principle which you have given expression to in your mature writings, consists of many more things than the humanist and encyclopaedic orientation of your adolescent and formative years. I am referring to your *Maurya and Sunga Art*, *Bangalir Itihas*, *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society*, *Indian Nationalism*, *Idea and Image in Indian Art*, for instance. Besides, do you think that the liberal humanist orientation alone explains your participation in active politics of

a militantly nationalist revolutionary party like that of the *Anusilan*, and later, of the Indian National Congress under Gandhiji's leadership. Or, does it explain your friendly association with such protestant political groups as those of the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India?

*Professor Ray* : You have asked me a very searching question, and it is quite possible that I should not be able to formulate a satisfactory and systematic answer. I would therefore request you to please bear with me.

Despite whatever else happened to me in my formative life and later in maturer years, when I look back and try to take a stock, I cannot but feel that it was the liberal humanist orientation of my adolescent and formative years which formed the basic foundation of my being. Even today when I am past seventy, it still remains the same, I am not ashamed to confess, a foundation which later in life, was further strengthened by personalities like those of Gandhi and Nehru, and I would say, of Marx as well, for instance.

But when one lives long as I have done and goes through diverse experiences, one goes on gathering and drawing in ideas, attitudes and approaches from many sources and many directions, some consciously but many more unconsciously. At the post-graduate level of formal education, I became a student of ancient Indian history and culture, particularly of the arts and religions of India, and hence of the origin and evolution of India's traditional aesthetic, social and cultural patterns and values, a field of human experience which is still the arena in which I love to roam at will from one end to the other and which has influenced and enriched me very greatly. India's speculative thought as articulated in the *Upanishads* and the *Aranyakas*, which I dived into later in life, has also very largely shaped my vision and imagination, and this as strongly and as effectively as India's life and arts through the ages have formed my love and zest for life and its limitless capabilities.

Equally deeply and vitally have I been affected and influenced by the nineteenth century European positivist and materialist thought, particularly of Marx. But then the nineteenth and early twentieth century European heritage was a very important factor in the formation of the urban intellectual climate of all knowledgeable Indians during the twenties, thirties and forties of this century, and no sensitive and young Indian of those decades could escape being somewhat conditioned by such seminal thinkers as Mill and Marx, Sorokin and Freud, for instance. But of this European heritage what influenced me most was the Marxian. Not being ever a student of economics I understood but very little of his economic thinking, but his method of dialectical analysis of social and historical situations and of the process of the evolution of human, particularly Western civilization, impressed me very much and seem to have considerably shaped and formed the



social and historical thinking of my maturer years. I was also moved by the basic humanist orientation of the socialist ideology in general and the Marxist humanist ideology in particular. Yet I would not call myself a Marxist as I would not describe myself as a Tagorite even, far less a Gandhian. I would not look upon any one of them as offering me a package deal for my total acceptance or total rejection.

The fact of the matter in regard to any eager and sensitive person seems to me that as he goes through life's various experiences he gathers ideas and impressions, gains images and visions, receives impacts and influences in varying degrees and learns quite a few things, at times consciously, at others not so consciously or even unconsciously. These are all thrown into the great crucible of one's mind and the senses where an unceasing process of cooking goes on all the time, a process which involves intellectual examination, experimentation, analysis and judgement as much as emotional responses and reactions, positive and negative. What eventually comes out of the process is no longer the original ideas and impressions, images and visions and impacts and influences, but modified, transformed and transmuted to a considerable extent and thus made one's own. Nevertheless, it does happen that certain ideas and ideologies, certain impacts and influences tend or prove to be so strong, insistent and overwhelming that they retain their original mould or form. It does not however seem to have happened in my case, I tend to perceive.

*Dr. Hitesranjan Sanyal :* Your interest in history, particularly in Indian history and culture, art and archaeology, religion and iconography, is easily understood. But how did you get involved in active politics and how did it affect your life?

*Professor Ray :* For those sensitive adolescents in their mid- and late teens who like me, grew up in what is now Bangladesh, the East Bengal of those days, it was difficult to keep away from the general socio-political milieu and environs of the times. My father was a government employee, a sub-inspector of schools, who during the *Svadesi* and Boycott movement had given up his secure job to become a teacher at the National School at Mymensingh which was my home-town. My early school education was at this school. But what really drew me into the politics of those days was my close association with the local social work of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement and with the public social service work of the well-known revolutionary parties like *Anusilan* and *Yugantar*; both were very active in Mymensingh at that time. One thing led to another, and quickly enough I found myself one fine morning "recruited" as a member of the *Anusilan* Party. I retained my close connection with the party, not so much as an activist but more as an active link-man and sympathiser, till as late as 1925-26 when I gave up my

formal association with them. Already in 1920-21 when I was in the second year intermediate class at college, I had given up my studies and joined the first Non-cooperation movement as a student-volunteer. Since then I had become actively involved in Congress work at the village level; indeed, the mass upsurge brought about by Gandhiji had moved me very deeply. By 1925-26 I seem to have matured enough to be able to realize that the path of revolutionary terrorism was not likely to bring us anywhere near to freedom, that active mass participation in political struggle was the only way which was open to us and that Gandhiji's lead in that struggle was indispensable at that phase. This did not however mean that I had accepted the creed of non-violence or of the spinning wheel. Be that as it may, before the leaders of the *Anusilan* I placed my opinion frankly and squarely; it was perhaps early in 1926 and in a secret meeting in Calcutta. At that time quite a few of the *Anusilan* leaders too, were assailed by doubts and questions of all sorts, but they were not yet prepared to formally disband the party. Nevertheless, very affectionately and gracefully did they allow me to leave the party which I did. But my doing so did not mean that I cut off my personal relationship with my colleagues and elders in the party; indeed such relationship continued, intermittently though, with those of the *Anusilan* and with quite a few of the *Yugantar* who found themselves, much later, in the Congress Socialist Party, the Communist Party of India and still later, in the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

Meanwhile I participated in the Congress Satyagraha movement of the early thirties and then again in the Quit India movement of 1942-43, though I was no longer an active member of the Congress, nor of any other organised anti-colonial, anti-imperialist freedom-fighting political group. The fact is that by 1927 when I came out of college with a post-graduate degree, I had already acquired a decided taste and aptitude for and some experience of intellectual writing in the field of contemporary politics and Bengali literature and of historical research. The rest seems to have been decided for me by my destiny, and this destiny came in the form of a research fellowship in art and archaeology at Calcutta University. For the next few years I was destined to share this life of advanced study and research with journalism and free-lance writing, just to be able to earn enough to survive during those years of depression, until I became a Lecturer at, and later also the Librarian of Calcutta University. But in whichever capacity I was engaged at any given time, whenever there was a critical political situation in the country and a mass upsurge on that account I could not help taking the full plunge and suffer or escape the consequences, and then when the tide ran out I came quietly back to my working desk. The University of Calcutta of those days used to allow us this privilege.

After Independence I lost the urge for active political participation, except for a spell of Rajya Sabha membership for eight years; but that was a different kind of politics, and I was never interested in carving out a political career for myself. Today my interest in contemporary politics, national and international, is only an intellectual one; it does not stir my depths.

I consider myself lucky that the psyche and will of my early youth led me to active participation in contemporary political struggles for freedom. It immensely enriched me in diverse ways. First, it afforded me a limitless fund of experience of men, things and situations, which otherwise I would have no occasion or opportunity to come by. Secondly, I came to know from within, steadily and by stages, the nature and character of political struggles for freedom in my country and hence of other countries, the various motivations, ideas and aspirations that inspired and drove the workers and their leaders, the strength and weakness of the movements as much as those of the leaders and their followers. Thirdly, I came to understand, slowly but more or less clearly, the ideologies of revolutionary terrorism, nationalism (of both the vintages, the liberal and constitutional on the one hand and extremist and militant on the other), socialism of various shades and nuances and even Communism—all at work before my very eyes, sometimes simultaneously and even in collaboration, at others, at cross purposes and from opposite camps. These I consider as great gains, gains that gave me new insights and new perceptions.

But the greatest gain was that active participation in politics brought my country and my people nearer to me, physically and emotionally, and I came to acquire a deep love and regard for both. From pure abstractions of text books they for the first time, became real to me, endowed with life and substance. Political lectures, group meetings, secret errands, link activities etc. took me from one end of the country to the other, obliged me to spend nights in peasant huts and hay stacks, seek shelter in abandoned houses and temples, play hide and seek with the police in city-lanes and village-markets, for instance. And thus I came into actual physical contact with our people at the middle and lower class and grass-root levels; their sorrows and sufferings, their depravity and degradation, the poverty and squalor and oppression they suffered from as much as their joys, their hopes and aspirations, their traditions and values—all these lay bare before my eyes. I also saw the old glories of the country in various stages of preservation, decay and disintegration, and suffered nostalgias as most people do, but more interesting to me were the reactions and responses of the common man to these glories. I observed, wherever I found myself, the fields and villages, the rivers and the mountains, cities and market-places, the configuration of the land, its flora and fauna, cropping pattern, the land system and land relation, the village organisation,

the kinship relation, the fairs and festivities, and dozens of other things. All these gave me new insights and perceptions, which seemed to impart new meaning and significance to what I knew from my studies in the history and geography of my country. They raised questions in me which our history books and our historians had no answer for. But for my participation in politics, in other words, my involvement in the life of our people I would not have gained those insights and perceptions, and asked myself no question. It taught me one lesson: reading books, library work, thinking and contemplation, sweating at the desk—these are all very good and necessary for any research worker in history and in matters social and cultural, but these are no substitute for actual field-work and involving oneself with live materials, namely, the lives and environs of the living men and women, and this, even for a historian. History is usually reconstructed along the arrow line of time; such reconstruction can be helped and supplemented by tracing one's footsteps backward from the present, especially in a traditional country like India where a great deal of the near and distant past is still alive in strong and/or weak currents.

What I have just said would perhaps explain incidentally, how and why I became interested in the study of contemporary life and society, of anthropology and sociology, of ecology and human geography.

One point I would like to make clear at this moment. I must confess that I never aimed at being a scholar *per se*; scholarship for its own sake, mere scholasticism never appealed to me. My one aim in studying Indian history, art and culture was to know my country and my people, as they were through the centuries and as they are today. History, art, archaeology, literature, the performing arts, anthropology, sociology, geography, politics—an intellectual understanding of all these disciplines and others besides, was very necessary towards achieving the objective which I have just spoken of. I strove and still do strive for clarity of this intellectual understanding because it contributes to the purity and depth of my emotional attachment to my country and people. Again, I would insist that I am no scholar, no *pandit*, but I would certainly like to be considered as an humble intellectual who seeks to interpret India's life, history and culture, objectively and critically of course, but also perceptively and creatively.

*Dr. Hitesranjan Sanyal* : Yesterday you gave us a glimpse of how you came to your vision of history, a vision which you have articulated and explained in your *Bangalir Itihas*. In fact, you said yesterday what you had done in the Introduction to that book of yours. But as one of your ex-students I know that you initiated your research studies in the political history of ancient India, and that too, in the old traditional manner of fixing dates and reconstructing dynastic histories. Later too, for quite some time, when you

have been working on the art and religion of Burma your approach seems to have been a traditional one, by and large, though in your *Theravada Buddhism in Burma* there is some evidence of a sociological approach to the study of history of religion. But not before your *Maurya and Sunga Art and Bangalir Itihas* does this approach seem to be a decided one. I am curious to know how and when you came to this approach and to the new method of historical analysis which, by now, we are all familiar with.

*Professor Niharranjan Ray* : Yes, you are right in saying that I started my research studies in a very traditional manner, the reason being that my training itself was a traditional one. One may not forget that in those days political and dynastic history was the main focus of study and research in Indian history, that the history of religion, art, society, politics and economics even, for instance, was approached from a political or dynastic point of view and that there was hardly any consciousness of interactions and interrelations of various social, economic and political forces at work at given times and places. That I started with dynastic history was, therefore, in the nature of things.

But then there was also an occasion to do so. For the award of their Mrinalini Gold Medal of 1926 Calcutta University had invited dissertations on the "Political history of ancient India from c. 600 to c. 900 A.D.", and my teacher, Professor Hemchandra Raychaudhuri for whom I had great regard and who held me in deep affection. asked me to compete for it, which I did. I was then in the final M.A. Class. The dissertation was examined by a Board consisting of Professor Raychaudhuri himself, Professor Devadatta Ramakrishna Bhandarkar and Professor Benimadhab Barua. The Board recommended the dissertation for acceptance and I was awarded the medal when I had just taken the Master's degree. Professors Bhandarkar and Raychaudhuri were both keen that I should have the dissertation published by Calcutta University in the form of a book and that I should continue this line of study. But I felt otherwise and decided against giving the dissertation a public and permanent lease of life; instead I saw published a few sections of it only in the form of independent papers, in professional journals. The reason was a very simple one; while working on that dissertation I came to feel that there was nothing in this kind of dynastic or political history in which I could find creative intellectual delight or satisfaction. Indeed, the field itself and the traditional method of study did not interest me at all, and I decided to get away from it. It was at this time that Professor Barua whose affection I have been enjoying, took me to Burma for about a month or so, to assist him in his research studies. He encouraged and helped me to have a close look at the country and its people and a closer look still at her archaeological sites and ancient and medieval monuments and monasteries.

For one full month I did so like one possessed but taking copious notes and collecting whatever printed materials and photographs I could get hold of, of the sites, monuments, sculptures and paintings. Even before I came back to Calcutta I had decided that art and architecture in Burma should be the field of my study and investigation for the next 10 years or so. I started learning Burmese, and also whatever Mon I could from inadequate publications; at the same time I went ahead with my study of the art and architecture of Burma. A year later I presented a dissertation on the subject at Calcutta University for their Premchand Roychand Studentship which was still considered to be a blue ribbon. The dissertation was accepted and the studentship awarded to me, but meanwhile I had found out that no study of art and architecture could be adequate and competent without a study of the socio-religious background of the art. Thus began a camping and touring sojourn in Burma for 2 or 3 months every year, from 1928 to 1933, and an intensive study of the literary and archaeological materials that I could lay my hands on, which resulted eventually in the publication of my three books on the Indian religions in Burma. The first two of these were written and published before 1937; the last one too, was written before that date, but published much later, in 1946, when I had long given up my Indo-Burmese studies.

I must confess that my studies in Indo-Burmese cultural relations, were also somewhat in traditional lines, and I introduced there no new approach nor any new method of analysis. But of one thing I was conscious throughout, namely, of the colonial character of the functioning of whatever Indian cultural items and features were introduced in Burma, except in the case of Theravada Buddhism and its culture which the Mons and the Burmese were able to make their own and integrate them into their life-patterns; also perhaps a few other minor elements of socio-political and rural agricultural life. But I am afraid, during those formative years of my intellectual career, I was not able to articulate this colonial phenomenon clearly and competently.

But meanwhile, as I was working on Indo-Burmese relations and gathering new experiences, insights and perceptions, my ideas on and approaches to history and literature were slowly undergoing certain changes. These changes were vaguely reflected, for the first time, in my *Rabindra-Sahityer Bhumika*, published in 1939, in which I made an attempt to present the creative writings of Tagore in their respective social settings and to analyze as to how the latter affected the ideas, themes, characters, forms and styles of the former.

But as you said, the decided break in approach and method manifested itself first in *Maurya and Sunga Art* and in *Bangalir Itihas*. The first one was written in 1946 and published a year later; the second one was actually published in 1949 but I had conceived and planned it and started writing



it out seven or eight years earlier. I may say therefore that the break which you hinted at, began to show itself from the mid-thirties, roughly speaking. One may not forget that the thirties in Bengal was a decade of serious and intense heart-searching in the realm of ideas and ideologies and of approaches and attitudes towards the study of political and economic situations, of history and sociology, of art and literature etc. I cannot say that I remained unaffected by this phenomenon.

*Professor Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya* : Last year, in 1973, you published two books, one on *Nationalism in India* which happens to be, as you have explained in the subtitle, an historical analysis of its stresses and strains. In this book you have applied the approach and method which you have made your own and which is always so refreshing and illuminating. But almost simultaneously you published another book, one on art, *Idea and Image of Indian Art*, if I remember aright. In this book you seem to have adopted a different approach, a somewhat idealistic one, if I may say so. Is it a departure, a deviation? Or, would you call it a variation?

*Professor Ray* : I am sorry if my *Idea and Image in Indian Art* has given you an impression of its approach being an idealistic one. No, I do not think I departed or deviated from my general social and sociological approach to the understanding of the problem I had before me. Rather I tried to find out if I could apply, meaningfully and effectively, the same approach and method of analysis but at a higher and subtler plane of study and investigation. As the title of the book itself says, the problem before me was to study the dialectical interrelationship between an abstract idea or concept and its concretized manifestation in a meaningful aesthetic form. As case studies I chose three such abstract concepts from our traditional repertoire and tried to find out how and to what extent these concepts were sought to be given concrete form in terms of sculpture, and conversely, how and to what extent the aesthetic forms themselves conditioned the growth and connotation of the abstract concepts. The method I adopted was that of social analysis, namely, I tried to study the story of the origin and evolution of the concepts along the arrow line of time, taking care to find how social changes had affected them. Simultaneously and side by side I studied the story of the evolution of the concrete aesthetic manifestations in terms of images, in other words, of the formal changes that were taking place, again because of changes in the socio-religious or socio-economic situations as much as in the tools and techniques of stone-cutting and carving. I also took into consideration the question of the material, that is, of the quality and character of the stone (or bronze) that was used, in regard to the concept on the one hand and the concrete image on the other. But I must confess as I did in the Preface itself, that it was an experimental study, though I feel happy that the experiment has been suc-

cessful to a good extent. In my forthcoming book on *Mughal Court Painting*, you would perhaps find a similar study, but on a lower level, that is, on a purely socio-historical one, as in *Maurya and Sunga Art*, not on an ideational and aesthetic level which is a very subtle one, as in *Idea and Image in Indian Art*.

**Professor Chakrabadhyaya :** You have dedicated in affectionate terms, your book on *Idea and Image* . . . to your esteemed teacher, colleague and friend, Professor Stella Kramrisch. But do you not think that in your presentation and interpretation of Indian plastic art and its history you have moved very far away from her as well as from Havell, Coomaraswamy and Zimmer?

**Professor Ray :** Yes, perhaps I have; indeed I have not very far, but somewhat away, to be frank. In a forthcoming book of mine, which I have titled *An Approach to Indian Art*, I have explained the traditional Indian approach as well as my own, and also *inter alia*, where I have drawn away from Havell and Coomaraswamy, Kramrisch and Zimmer. I must not therefore go into this aspect of your question, since the book will be before you in about three or four months' time from now. Incidentally, I have dedicated this book to the memory of Coomaraswamy to acknowledge my indebtedness to this great intellectual interpreter of Indian art and culture. At this moment however, I shall confine myself to what you have hinted about Kramrisch and would take this opportunity to give you an idea of how I feel about those who initiated me into the study and understanding of Indian history and culture which has ever been the focal centre of my intellectual endeavours, and those others at Calcutta University with whom I came into close contact and whose affection I had the privilege to enjoy. Drawing oneself away from what one receives from his teachers, is of little human significance; it does not, should not affect personal human relationships. I should think that it is not an unusual intellectual phenomenon and that not unoften it signalises a step forward towards advancement of learning and accumulation of wisdom, though I do not have any claim in this regard.

Be that as it may, the fact is that for more than three decades and a half when I was closely associated with Calcutta University as Research Fellow, Lecturer, Managing Editor of *Calcutta Review* which was the University's own Journal, Chief Librarian, Reader and Professor I had the rare privilege of enjoying the affection and kind consideration of such personalities as Professors Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Surendranath Dasgupta, Devadatta Ramakrishna Bhandarkar, Surendranath Sen, Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, Benimadhab Barua, Stella Kramrisch, Sunitikumar Chatterji, Prabodhchandra Bagchi, Nalinaksha Dutt, Jitendranath Banerjee, Dr. Kalidas Nag, Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee and quite a few others. When



I was Chief Librarian I had a cubicle in the university library by the side of the main reading room, and the teachers of the University including those whom I have just referred to, used to drop in whenever they felt like, to allow me the privilege of their valued company. In the sprawling Teachers' Common Room at the Asutosh Building raw research workers, tutors, young and senior lecturers, white haired professors—all jostled together, talking, arguing, gossiping, holding serious discussions even, in a very homely and joyous atmosphere. No, we had not in those days heard of the phrase 'generation gap', nor had we any consciousness of an academic or intellectual hierarchy. The environs and the general academic climate was indeed very much different from what one finds today. You may therefore be able to perceive how deep and sincere are still my regard and affection for my teachers and for all those whom I came into close contact with at Calcutta University; they too, gave me their love and affection in an unstinted measure, and my gratefulness on this account knows no limits.

For whatever little intellectual enrichment I could earn I am particularly grateful to my three teachers: Professors Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, Benimadhab Barua and Stella Kramrisch, and since you asked me particularly about Kramrisch, I feel proud to record that it was she who opened my eyes to the magic and mystery of Indian art and inculcated in me the love and regard for the subject which I retain to this day. My perceptions were sharpened by her and whatever insights I have been able to develop in regard to this field of knowledge, have been because of the initial training she imparted to me. Later, I had the privilege of being a colleague of hers but much more than that, we became warm friends. Yet I always regarded her as I do to this day as a teacher. She still remains with me a fond inspiration which I treasure.

Yes, you are right that I have drawn away from her in my approach and attitude towards our common field of study; my method of analysis is also very much different from hers. But one must not forget that howsoever mystical, esoteric and metaphysical may be at times her general approach to and howsoever preoccupied she may be with the symbols of Indian art, she is never oblivious of the formal aesthetic values, the ideational motivations and the social environs and stimuli of the art. Indeed, evidence of her consciousness in this regard is scattered all over her rich contributions in the field.

*Professor Chattopadhyaya* : Since you have given us an idea of how you feel about your teachers you might as well tell us something about your life and experience as a teacher. In our days we used to hear a great deal about your very deep involvement with the students of the University, particularly with your own students, and they too, seem to have been crazy about you, if I may say so.

**Professor Ray :** Yes, I was very fortunate that way. But the University authorities did not like this deep involvement of mine with the students; in fact, they frowned upon it. On more than one occasion I was warned that I should be careful of evil tongues and tricky intents; there was at least one occasion when a certain Vice-Chancellor was so angry with me that he wanted to see me walk out of the University. As it happened, before the year was out the Vice-Chancellor himself walked out and I continued to stay on. But let me not speak about the funny side of things.

I came to the teaching profession by choice, of my own will, not because I could not get a berth elsewhere. As a matter of fact, at that point of time I could be a journalist, since I had already got a foothold there; I was at that time Literary Editor of *Liberty* which was Subhas Chandra Bose's English daily; I was called to that position by Subhas Babu himself. To get back to what I was saying. I came to teaching perhaps because I had acquired from my father who was a dedicated teacher, a great love and regard for the profession. He provided me the image of a good, devoted and dedicated teacher who used to be very fond of his students; they too, gave him their love and regard in large measures. However, very early in my career as a teacher I found out that I enjoyed teaching, enjoyed communication with the students and was pleasantly surprised to discover that the students delighted in their association with me as much as I did in their company. I therefore hated to miss my classes or any of the students' meetings or social functions in which, I came to notice. I was always wanted, almost invariably. Till the early fifties there were not many students in the post-graduate classes; at any rate the number was still manageable, and I used to take some pride in the fact that I knew more or less personally, most of the boys and girls, who, year after year, passed through the corridors of the Asutosh and the Darbhanga Buildings. Those who were directly my students I used to know each one of them, their personal situations and their family backgrounds; very often they used to come to my house, and without any hesitation they would place their personal problems and difficulties before me and seek my help and advice. Their trust and confidence in me was such that I found it difficult not to involve myself with their youthful lives and their varied individual and collective problems—intellectual and emotional, economic and political. I seem to have enjoyed this involvement; in the process the warmth of human relationship exuded by these young lives, seems to have nourished and enriched me. Apart from what little I could teach them in the class or at my house, they on their part, seem to have found in me a friend who loved and cared for them, and stood by them in their stresses and strains, in their distress and depression. Indeed, well-nigh 35 years of my teaching career at Calcutta University and my involvement with the

students during these long years, happen to remain one of the fondest of my memories which I cherish and treasure to this day. Therefore when I hear these days of the worsening situation in teacher-student relationship in our universities, I feel very sad indeed, and I do not seem to believe much of what I hear.

*Professor Chattopadhyaya* : Dr. Ray, you may not, since your personal experience has been different, but we the teachers of today know very well indeed that the teacher-student relationship is even tragically worse than what you hear from a distance. The situation today is really altogether different than what it was in your days.

*Professor Ray* : May be, you are right. May be, there are good reasons for it. Certainly the situation can be explained sociologically, as many have been doing already. Nevertheless, I cannot help feeling very sad about it. But I seem to be an incorrigible optimist and would love to believe that it is a passing phase. Besides, I still believe that for a really good and honest, efficient and creative teacher, who sincerely cares for his flock, our boys and girls of the present generation even, have great love and regard. I love to imagine that even in the very turbid and turbulent situation of today there are boys and girls who feel a deep attachment for such a teacher and are prepared to do his bidding. We teachers have to try to be true to our vocation and learn to tend our flock honestly and lovingly. Love is the magic wand that should work still, I fondly believe.

*Dr. Hitesranjan Sanyal* : May I change the subject and ask you an altogether different question. You must be knowing that both in West Bengal and Bangladesh there is a deep but affectionate resentment against you, namely, that for a very long time you have not been writing anything in Bengali, neither in the field of history nor in that of art and literary criticism. Also that you have not been doing anything to bring out a revised edition of your *Bangalir Itihas : adiparva* which has been out of print for the last 20 years, I believe. Besides, the Bengali reading public has been earnestly expecting you to write out and publish the 2nd volume of *Bangalir Itihas* covering the entire medieval period. After all, your reputation in Bengal rests very largely on your being a writer of serious and intellectual Bengali prose, and I believe, we have a right to expect that you should be writing more in Bengali.

*Professor Niharranjan Ray* : Thank you very much, Hites, for the compliment. I appreciate the resentment you have spoken of, and I must plead guilty to the charge implied in this resentment. I have also noticed this resentment being articulated publicly in the press. Certainly I owe an explanation, irrespective of whatever its worth.

Left to myself, that is for my own creative satisfaction and for whatever

little reputation I have among the Bengali reading public, all that I have written in English I would have certainly loved to do originally in Bengali, the one language which I have learnt to speak and write. English is not a language which I have been able to master well enough. Yet if I have been writing in English more than in Bengali, there is one reason for it.

From the late thirties I have been consciously seeking to find new attitudes and approaches to the study of literature and history and also a certain new method of analysis, and this, I thought, I should be doing in Bengali in which, I imagined, I could find articulation easier; it was also a very natural desire. The first feeble attempt in this direction was made in my *Rabindra-Sahityer Bhumika* which has run through six editions, but a more ambitious one, and perhaps also in a more deliberate manner, in the *Bangalir Itihas : adiparva*. The second book was hailed as a welcome departure in Indian historiography, which was very satisfying to me, I must confess. The first one too, was welcomed as marking a new approach. But this recognition remained confined within the four walls of the Bengali reading public and the Bengali intelligentsia alone. Even after two decades Indian historians and students of history outside of West Bengal and Bangladesh, while they may have heard about the title of the book, *Bangalir Itihas*, do not know anything of what I sought to experiment with and to achieve in that book, nothing to speak of the world of scholars and intellectuals outside of India. This happened with *Rabindra-Sahityer Bhumika* too, the reason why 25 years later I chose to write another book on Rabindranath (*An Artist in Life, a commentary on the life and works of Rabindranath Tagore*), this time in English, and it is some satisfaction to me that the approach and method which I have been concerned with for about 30 years now, have found wide acceptance elsewhere in India and in the world of English-speaking intellectuals in the West. I wish this happened with *Bangalir Itihas* as well. Yet a smaller book of mine, of lesser significance, to my mind, *Maurya and Sunga Art* which I wrote in English and which was published about four years earlier than *Bangalir Itihas*, found ready acceptance with historians of Indian art all the world over; it has already run through two editions and a third revised and enlarged version has been called for. This does not usually happen to technical treatises in the field of art history.

You may, if you choose, call it vanity of a sort and say that an intellectual need not seek national and international acceptance or recognition. But let me be frank and honest with myself. I am not a creative writer of imaginative literature; all that I happen to strive for is to be an intellectual attempting to interpret facts and situations of Indian life, history and tradition as manifested in our arts, society, polity, literature, religion etc. For this presentation and interpretation I have been seeking to evolve certain new attitudes and

approaches and certain methods of analysis, through certain exercises in historical and literary studies, which result naturally in certain new findings or open up new avenues for further study. Naturally I want to find out how my colleagues in the same field or fields and intellectuals in general, in India and abroad, respond and react to my attitudes and approaches, my methods and findings, whether they consider these valid or void, rational or otherwise, responsible or frivolous. In their responses and reactions I may find something which may be helpful for my further study or may be a welcome corrective.

Fortunately or unfortunately English is still the only language with us which enables communication on a national and international scale, and this is the one compelling reason why my writings have been, for the last 25 years or so, almost exclusively in English. I am afraid, for another couple of books yet, which I have in view, the language of communication will continue to be the same, and for the same reason.

This does not however mean that I have not been looking forward to resume articulating myself in Bengali. But life is short and I am already past seventy. I do not know therefore when I should be able to do so. If and when I find time and if my faculties remain as they are today, I shall at least try to write out the second volume of *Bangalir Itihas*. That will be the happiest consummation of my humble intellectual life, I can assure my Bengali readers. In the mean time I shall request them to bear with me. I am also looking out for some time an opportunity to bring out a revised third edition of the *Bangalir Itihas : adiparva*. The book has been out of print for the last 20 years. I feel very guilty.

**Dr. Sanyal :** You just said that you have in view two more books to be written in English. What are these two? Have you started working on them?

**Professor Ray :** One is about *An Approach to Indian History* which I am planning as a companion volume to my *An Approach to Indian Art*. This will consist of a number of separate but not unrelated essays on certain aspects, factors and problems which, I believe, should be taken into consideration in our approach to the study of Indian history; incidentally I would also like to explain my personal historiographical point of view. The second book I have in view is a full-length history of Indian art, mainly of sculpture and painting. I am quite conscious that since Coomaraswamy published his *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, now well-nigh half-a-century ago, quite a few authoritative and comprehensive contributions have been made on the subject by scholars like Rowland, Kramrisch, Goetz and Zimmer. Recently Mario Bussagli and Sivaramamurti have also published jointly a sumptuous volume on the subject. Yet I feel that there is scope for another full-length work trying to present traditional Indian art as an articulation

of traditional Indian life in its various manifestations, looking at art as a form of social activity not unrelated with other forms of social activities, and from a relatively more humanistic point of view. Indian art objects have too often been interpreted as illustrative materials of Indian religions and their symbols, myths and legends. I believe they are a great deal more than just that, and my aim should be to bring out their total social, human and aesthetic significance.

Have I started working on these two books? Yes and no. Any intellectual worth his salt has his or her inner-yard workshop where an unceasing process of work goes on all the time, building models and dismantling them and building again, collecting notes and materials and organizing and re-organizing them, throwing out chips in all directions and gathering them again, for instance. In this sense I have started work on both the books. But if you ask me whether I have started the final re-organisation and actual writing out, I would say 'no', somewhat regretfully, since I do not have many years of active life before me.

*Professor Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya :* We have been talking so far about your academic and intellectual life. But you have also earned some reputation as a successful academic organiser and administrator. In Calcutta and West Bengal we know how successfully you re-organized and administered the library system of the University of Calcutta and transformed its Central Library into an effective, attractive and creative centre of academic work. We have also heard from those who had been to the Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Simla, that you had built up there in the short span of five years, the finest institute in India for advanced study and research in the humanities and the social sciences. How did you manage to do this? What do you think to be the key to your success in this direction?

*Professor Ray :* I do not know what success I achieved at either the Calcutta University Library or at the Simla Institute; it is for others to judge. I can only confess that I personally experienced a great creative satisfaction in what I did at both the places. The proposition is a very simple one, to my mind. I was asked to do a certain thing which I liked, and about which I had certain ideas. All that I asked for in return was that I should be given a more or less free hand which in each case I was lucky to have. The rest was all a matter of common sense, patient and steady, honest and purposeful application to work and cultivation of good, helpful and warm human relationship with everybody concerned and at all stages. Frankly, I know of no magic key in this regard. But one thing I must confess: I do not enjoy day-to-day organisational and administrative work as much as I do my academic and intellectual one.

*Professor Chattopadhyaya* : One final question, Dr Ray, and we would take leave of you. I presume that despite your being generally away from Calcutta for a good number of years and your busy and active academic and intellectual life, you continue to keep your contacts with what is going on in the cultural and intellectual life of this city in particular and of West Bengal in general. To me it seems that in more senses than one, this life has been facing a crisis; a certain loss of direction leading to barren conflicts and confounding contradictions seem to have been afflicting us. How have you been looking at this situation—as an intellectual having deep interest in matters social and cultural?

*Professor Ray* : My dear Dcbi, I see, it is your last question, but I also see that you kept your most difficult question till you neared the end. I do not know if I should be able to meet your question adequately and with any amount of satisfaction to myself. Indeed, I do not seem to be able to give an analysis of the situation which is admittedly very difficult. However, let me try.

I would admit that whatever contacts I have been having with West Bengal's cultural and intellectual life for the last one decade or so, has been through books, periodicals and newspapers. I do not have any more that live personal contact with our teachers, writers, poets, artists, playwrights, actors, musicians, social workers, journalists, editors and political leaders and workers of all parties, which I used to have all my life from my early youth onwards. Many of them I used to know intimately and well. Nor do I have any more those frequent opportunities of moving about in the villages and in big and small *mofussil* towns of West Bengal on the pretext of or in connection with one thing or the other, which I once used to enjoy, again from my early youth to the early sixties. No amount of reading and indirect knowledge can be any substitute for the kind of direct experience which these visits and travels used to afford me. Today I do not have any direct contacts with the new generation of political workers, irrespective of the parties they belong to, and hence with the working of their minds, their plans and programmes. The same is the case with the new generation of writers and artists, poets and playwrights, editors and journalists, actors and teachers belonging to the different age-groups below forty or somewhat above, roughly speaking. I am afraid, therefore, that I may be quite off the mark in my off-hand comments.

For the purpose of analysis one may perhaps break up the cultural-intellectual situation in West Bengal in three or four parts though intrinsically it is one whole. The most engaging part which readily meets the eye and affects the day-to-day life of every single individual, is certainly the politico-economic aspect of our life which is the most critical one. Lack of direction,



ideological and programmatic confusion, absence of purposiveness and determination, cynical disregard of all moral considerations and an unscrupulous careerism that one sees all around, are certainly symptoms of a process of cultural disintegration and erosion of individual and collective character. But this sad and sordid situation is not the creation of today or even yesterday; indeed it has been manifesting itself, slowly and steadily but surely, since the Second World War, the Bengal Famine and the Partition of Bengal. But because of a relatively more economically stable position and a certain pressure of moral principles associated with the then current political ideologies, policies and programmes, the situation did not deteriorate to the extent it has done today. This may perhaps be accounted for by the rapid erosion of economic stability and total disregard of ideological principles and hence of moral values in politics. This general deterioration of politico-economic life has very seriously affected our administration, all our social and cultural institutions and the day-to-day life and behaviour pattern of individuals and groups of all social levels. This is the basic malady of our contemporary life, to my mind.

I have just said that this malady has affected all our social and political institutions including the educational and academic ones. Indeed, our schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher learning are in complete disarray. Because of social explosion from below, the problem of huge numbers and economic instability, standards have been going down very rapidly and there is hardly any discipline anywhere. Yet, the fact remains that despite all sorts of adverse circumstances our best teachers and students of today, that is, of this generation, are not worse than they were yesterday and the day before; in certain cases they are certainly as good if not better. I am referring to this fact to record my impression that there has been no deterioration of the essential quality of the Bengali mind and imagination, though the average certainly gives a different impression. I would even say that the standard of serious intellectual writing in various subjects by young men and women of this generation, that one comes across in our Bengali 'Little' Magazines, for instance, is certainly very high, and quantitatively too, the number of such writings is considerable. In science and technology, in economics and sociology, in history and literary criticism and certain other border-line fields of study our younger generation have been making contributions which one cannot ignore. Even in the very turbulent and desperate politico-economic situation which West Bengal presents today, one may find, if one chooses to, quite, unassuming young souls pouring over recondite Chinese or Tibetan texts, browsing through fragile archival materials, trying to formulate and interpret an abstruse economic concept or to collect anthropological data in the tribal areas of the Madhya Pradesh or of Aruna-



chal, for instance. No, I have not lost hope in Bengali youth's quest for knowledge and for the life of the mind.

I feel still more hopeful when I look at the imaginative and creative life of the present generation. It is amazing to find half-a-dozen or more periodicals given to poetry alone, circulating more or less regularly and successfully, and the material they contain is of a fairly good standard. About the quality of contemporary Bengali poetry that is published in our general periodicals, apart from books of poetry which are released in numbers by poets and publishers, one can perhaps claim that it is more than just adequate and competent. Indeed, it seems that today to write bad poetry in Benagli is indeed a difficult task. In the art of cinematography our contemporary directors, script writers, actors, actresses and technicians have been setting up values and standards which are the envy of their colleagues elsewhere; indeed these have now touched a level where Bengali films are judged by the highest international measures. Then there is a most active, efficient and creative theatre movement which is sustained by a wide, discerning and knowledgeable clientele. The daringness of experiment, the standard of acting and general presentation, the refinement of taste and the consciousness of social realities which one notices in this movement, exhibit no signs of weakness of imagination or of lack of will and vision, to my mind.

I would not therefore say that we are facing today a disintegration of our intellectual and cultural life. Not yet, at any rate. What has been happening is, to my mind, a disruption of our political and economic life, and this disruption has cast a dark shadow over the entire area of our body social. As I see it, there is no overnight magic remedy of an evil of such magnitude, an evil which is fast poisoning the entire social system and may eventually disintegrate our intellectual and cultural life even.

The main motivation in contemporary life and society is, for good or for evil, political and economic. Life and society in West Bengal as much as in the rest of India, are no exceptions. We must therefore try to re-organize our political and economic life first, and give it a vigorously healthy direction. We can do so only by being moral in our political and economic behaviour; there is no other way, to my mind. Political and economic morality is not the morality of text books and priestly mentors; this morality emanates from ideological clarity and conviction, intellectual honesty and emotional purity and from courage, organisation and determination to carry out the ideological and intellectual convictions. Corruption is the symptom of a disease; it is not the disease itself which is lack of political character.

But I am sounding pontifical. I must therefore close now.

*Professor Chattopadhyaya* : Thank you very much, Dr. Ray.

*Professor Ray* : Rather I should thank you, both of you.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Select list of Published Papers, Articles, Addresses, etc. in English of  
Professor Niharranjan Ray*

1. "Harsa Śilāditya: a revised study", in *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. III, December 1927, pp. 769-793.
2. "The Maukharis of Kanoj", in *The Calcutta Review*, February 1928, pp. 201-219.
3. "Maitrakas of Valabhī", in *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. IV, September 1928, pp. 453-474.
4. "Some additional notes on foreign elements in Hindu population", in *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta, Vol. IV, December 1928, pp. 740-750.
5. "A note on the chronology of the Later Pratihāras", in *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, Vol. LVII, December 1928, pp. 230-234.
6. "A sandstone head of the Gupta period", in *Modern Review*, Calcutta, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, February 1930, pp. 237-238.
7. "Origin of the Rajputs: The nationality of the Gujars", in *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona.
8. "Three bas-reliefs from Thaton (Burma)", in *Modern Review*, Calcutta, Vol. XLVIII, No. 6, December 1930, pp. 635-639.
9. "A Sūrya icon from a Daśāvatāra temple, Pagan", in *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. VII, June 1931, pp. 331-333.
10. "Three Viṣṇu sculptures from Hmawza, Prome", in *Modern Review*, Calcutta, Vol. L, No. 2, August 1931, pp. 152-157.
11. "Calcutta in Woodcuts", in *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*.
12. "The Mathura Pillar inscription of Chandragupta II, G.E. 61", in *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, Vol. LXI, June 1932, pp. 117-118.
13. "The Nat-Htaung Temple and its gods (Pagan, Burma)", in *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, Vol. LXI, September 1932, pp. 175-179; 197-200.
14. "Sculptures and Bronzes from Pagan", in *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta, Vol. II, No. 1, June 1934, pp. 32-42.
15. "Poetry and modern criticism", in *The Calcutta Review*, August 1934, pp. 209-244.
16. "Were the Maukharis Mālavas? Were the Mālavas an ethnic type?" in *Indian Culture*, Vol. I, No. 2, October 1934, pp. 298-300.
17. "Mahayanist and Tantrik texts in Burma", in *Indian Culture*, Vol. I, No. 2, October 1934, pp. 282-284.
18. "Young India and international fellowship", in *Modern Review*, Calcutta, Vol. LIX, No. 6, June 1936, pp. 641-644 (adapted from a lecture delivered at the Colchester Rotary Club and Y.M.C.A., Eastern Division, England, April 1936).
19. "Federation of Indian and Ceylonese students abroad", in *Modern Review*, Calcutta, Vol. LX, No. 3, September 1936, pp. 322-327 (Presidential address delivered at the Sixth Convention of the Federation of Indian and Ceylonese students abroad, Prague, 1936).
20. "The situation in Palestine and Indian opinion", in *Modern Review*, Calcutta, Vol. LX, No. 4, October 1936, pp. 451-454.

21. "The Bengal School of Painting today", in *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta, Vol. IV, December 1936, pp. 126-129.
22. "Paintings at Pagan", in *Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Calcutta, Vol. VI, 1938, pp. 137-148.
23. "Early traces of Buddhism in Burma", in *The Journal of the Greater India Society*, Calcutta, Vol. VI, Nos. 1 and 2, January and July 1939, pp. 1-52 and 99-123.
24. "[The art of] Sculpture [of ancient Bengal]", in *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Dacca University, Dacca, 1st edn., 1943, pp. 520-547.
25. "Mediaeval Bengali Culture: a socio-historical interpretation", in *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. XI, Parts 1 and 2, New Series, May-July and August-October 1945, pp. 45-55 and 87-95.
26. "[The art of] Sculpture [of India]", in *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vols. II, III and V, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1951; 1954; 1957, pp. 506-527; 516-536; 640-675.
27. "[The art of] Painting [and other arts of India]", in *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vols. II, III and V, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1951; 1954; 1957, pp. 528-540; 537-554; 676-700.
28. "Mauryan Art", in *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, ed. by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Bharatiya Itihas Parishad, Banaras, 1952, Chap. XI, pp. 342-391.
29. "Certain aspects of Early Medieval Indian history and culture", in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Ahmedabad Session, 1953. (Address of the President of the Early Medieval Section.)
30. "Certain notions relating to form and style in Indian art", in *J. N. Banerjea Felicitation Volume*, Alumni Association, Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 165-171.
31. "Rabindranath Tagore and the Indian tradition", in *Rabindranath Tagore, a Centenary Volume*, 1861-1961, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1961, pp. 223-233.
32. "Formative years" (1857-1882) [of the University of Calcutta], in [One] *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, University of Calcutta, 1957, Vol. I.
33. "Tagore's concept of art and reality", in *Cultural Forum*, Tagore Number, Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, 1961, pp. 39-44.
34. "Three novels of Tagore: *Chokher Bāli*, *Gorā*, *Yogāyog*", in *Indian Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, Vol. 4, 1961, pp. 163-181.
35. "Rabindranath, the last phase", in *Rabindranath*, Greater India Series, No. 4, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 90-118.
36. "Archaeology in India today", in *Ancient India*, New Delhi, Nos. 18 and 19, 1962 and 1963, pp. 222-229. (Convocation Address at the Second Convocation of the School of Archaeology, Archaeological Survey of India).
37. "Protohistoric paintings and drawings of India", in *Proceedings of the International Congress of Orientalists*, New Delhi, 1964, Vol. III, Part II, Poona, 1970, pp. 744-750.
38. "Gandhi's thinking in politics and economics", *Gandhi Centenary Lectures*, Punjab University, Chandigarh.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

39. "Gandhiji and his mission: a synoptical view", *Gandhi Centenary Lectures*, Punjab University, Chandigarh.
40. "Nature and Character of Cultural Development in India and South-east Asia", in *The Proceedings of the Seminar on India and South-east Asia* held at Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi, 1967.
41. "The 'medieval' factor in Indian history", in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 29th session, Patiala, 1967 (Address of the General President).
42. "The concept of *Sahaj* in Guru Nānak's theology, and its antecedents", a paper presented at the International Seminar on Guru Nanak and his teachings, held at the Punjabi University, Patiala, on September 3-5, 1969, and published later in the *Proceedings of the Seminar* as well as in the author's *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society*.
43. "Rājasthānī Painting", in *Bulletin of the Indian Museum*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1966. Indian Museum, Calcutta (An All-India Radio broadcast talk at the Delhi Station, 1966).
44. "Rabindranath Tagore and Myself", a short address given at the Reception by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, following the Akademi Award for the best writing in English (*An Artist in Life*) for the years 1967-69, 1969.
45. "Writing and the writer today", Presidential Address at the All-India P.E.N. Writers' Conference, Tenth Session, Patiala, December 1969.
46. "Main trends of research done in India about artistic and literary expressions of the past and the present", a short report drawn up for a UNESCO symposium, 1970.
47. "The art of Barhut", in *Times of India*, Special Annual Number, Bombay, 1970.
48. "Buddhism in South-east Asia", in *Indian and Foreign Review*, 1973.
49. "Trends in the studies and research in India on Buddhist Arts", in *Studies and Research on Buddhist Arts*, 1960-69, Tokyo, 1973.
50. "Jawaharlal Nehru and Social Change", in *Jawaharlal Nehru and Social Change*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1974. (Presidential Address at the Seminar on Jawaharlal Nehru and Social Change at the Punjabi University, Patiala, on 27 and 28 October 1973.)
51. "Hazarat Baba Sheikh Farid: his place in Indian culture", in *Baba Sheikh Farid Octocentenary* volume, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1974. (Presidential Address at the Baba Farid Seminar held at New Delhi on 16 and 17 November, 1973.)
52. "The age and social message of Guru Nanak", in *Guru Nanak: a homage*, Sahitya Akademi, 1973.
53. "An Editorial essay" [on Rammohun Roy], in *Rammohun Roy: a homage*, New Delhi, 1974.
54. "Subhas Chandra Bose", in *Udichi Annual*, 1973, Vivekananda Vihar, New Delhi, pp. 119-121.
55. "Evolution of the Buddha image in India: early stages of evolution; Maturity and efflorescence; later variations and developments", in *Album of the Buddha Image*, UNESCO, Paris, 1974, Chapters III(a), IV(a) and V(a).
56. "Religion and Society", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. I, 1965, pp. 9-11. (Inaugural Report at the Seminar on the subject.)

## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

57. "Indian aesthetics and art activity", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 2, 1968, pp. 3-6. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
58. "Sikhism and Indian society", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 4, 1967, pp. 1-12. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
59. "Modernity and contemporary Indian literature", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 5, 1968, pp. 3-12. (Inaugural Address at Seminar on the subject.)
60. "India and contemporary Islam", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 6, 1971, pp. 1-7. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
61. "Trends of socio-economic change in India: 1871-1961", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 7, 1969, pp. 3-5. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
62. "Language and society in India", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 8, 1969. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
63. "Man, Science and Society", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 9, 1970, pp. 3-10. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
64. "Urgent research in social anthropology", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 10, 1969, pp. 17-26. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
65. "Gandhi, Theory and Practice, social impact and contemporary relevance", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 11, 1969, pp. 3-17. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
66. "Tribal situation in India", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 13, 1972, pp. 3-24. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on the subject.)
67. "Macro-sociology of India", in *Beyond the Village: sociological explorations*, *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 15, 1972, pp. 1-5. (Inaugural Address at the seminar on the subject.)
68. "Indian Literature", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla, Vol. 16, 1972, pp. 3-10. (Address of Welcome at the Seminar on the subject.)
69. "Tradition and change in Indian history", in *Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*, Simla. (Introductory Address at the Seminar on Historical Models in the study of Tradition and Change in India.)
70. Convocation Address, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, 9 March 1974, in *Visva-Bharati News*, May 1974.

## BOOKS IN ENGLISH

1. *Brahmanical gods in Burma: a Chapter of Indian art and iconography*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1932, xii + 100 pp., 23 pls., 30 monochrome figs. Out of print; revised 2nd edn. in preparation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

2. *Maurya and Śuṅga art*: University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1945, viii + 117 pp., 11 pls. 20 figs., printed on hand-made paper. Revised and enlarged 2nd edn., Indian Studies: Past and Present, Calcutta, 1965, Quarto x + 123 pp. 45 figs., 32 pls.
3. *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma*: H. J. Paris, Amsterdam, 1936, Royal xvi + 110 pp. Revised, enlarged and illustrated 2nd edn. University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1937, xvi + 116 pp. 26 monochrome figs. Out of print; revised 3rd edn. in preparation.
4. *An introduction to the study of Theravāda Buddhism in Burma*, a study in Indo-Burinese historical and cultural relations from the earliest times to the British conquest, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1946, xvi + 306 pp. Out of print; revised 2nd edn. in preparation.
5. *Dutch activities in the East* (edited), Calcutta, 1946. (A report, presumably by Danvers, edited with Introduction and Notes.)
6. *Art in Burma*, Rangoon, 1954, viii + 110 pp. 50 pls. 86 figs. (Limited edn. for private circulation). Out of print; revised and enlarged new edn. under preparation.
7. *An Artist in Life: a commentary on the life and works of Rabindranath Tagore*, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1967, Demy Octavo viii + 481 pp.
8. *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society: a study in social analysis*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1970, Demy Octavo x + 206 pp. Out of print; 2nd edn. in press.
9. *Idea and image in Indian art*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1973, viii + 140 pp. 98, monochrome figs.
10. *Nationalism in India: an historical analysis of its stresses and strains*, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1973, viii + 180 pp.
11. *Mughal Court Painting, a social and formal analysis*, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1974, xi + 133 pp., 33 multicoloured plates.
12. *Maurya and post-Maurya art*, Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, 1974, ix + 143 pp., 98 figs., (revised and enlarged 3rd edn. of *Maurya and Śuṅga art*).
13. *An approach to Indian art*, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1974, xii + 299 pp. (Tagore Lectures).
14. *East Indian Bronzes*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, in press, pls. & figs.

## ANTHOLOGY ETC. EDITED

1. [One] Hundred Years [of the University of Calcutta] (edited jointly with Pratul Chandra Gupta), University of Calcutta, 2 vols., 1957.
2. Rammohun Roy: a homage (edited), National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1974, xxxviii + 200 pp.

## বই : বাংলা

- রবীন্দ্র-সাহিত্যের ভূমিকা—কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, কলিকাতা, ১৯৪১ (১০৪৮), রয়্যাল ১৯+৪৯০ পৃ।  
 পরিশোধিত ও পরিবর্ধিত দ্বিতীয় সং, দুই খণ্ড, বৃক এম্পোরিয়াম, কলিকাতা, ১০৫১, ডবল ডিমায়ে, ৪৯৫+৪২৪ পৃ।  
 পঞ্চম সং, দুই খণ্ড একত্রে। নিউ এজ্ পাবলিশার্স, কলিকাতা, ১০৬৯, রয়্যাল ৬৭+৪৮৪ পৃ।  
 বাংলার নবমণী—বিশ্ববিদ্যা সংগ্রহ গ্রন্থমালা, বিশ্বভারতী, কলিকাতা, ১০৫৪, ৪+৪৮ পৃ। মানচিত্র ১।  
 প্রাচীন বাংলার দৈনন্দিন জীবন—বিশ্ববিদ্যা সংগ্রহ গ্রন্থমালা, বিশ্বভারতী, কলিকাতা, ১০৫৬, ৬+৪০ পৃ। ১৭টি ছবি।  
 বাংলায় হিন্দুর বর্ণবিদ্যা—বিশ্ববিদ্যা সংগ্রহ গ্রন্থমালা, বিশ্বভারতী, কলিকাতা।  
 বাংলার ইতিহাস : আদিপর্ব—বৃক এম্পোরিয়াম, কলিকাতা, ১৯৪৯, রয়্যাল ৯২৭ পৃ। একরঙা ছবি, মানচিত্র।  
 দ্বিতীয় পুনর্মুদ্রণ, বৃক এম্পোরিয়াম, কলিকাতা, ১৯৫১। (বহু বৎসর অপ্রাপ্য, পরিবর্ধিত ও পরিশোধিত তৃতীয় সংস্করণ রচনাধীন।)  
 বাংলার ইতিহাস : আদিপর্ব—(সংক্ষেপিত সংস্করণ), জ্যোৎস্না সিংহরায় কর্তৃক সংক্ষেপিত, লেখক-সমবার-সমিতি, কলিকাতা, ডিমায়ে বোল পেজ, ২০+৫০১ পৃ। মানচিত্র।  
 বাংলার ইতিহাস—(সংক্ষেপে ডক্টর নীহাররঞ্জন রায়-এর বাংলার ইতিহাস : আদিপর্ব) সূত্রায় মৃদোপাধ্যায়কৃত কিশোর সংস্করণ, নিউ এজ্ পাবলিশার্স, কলিকাতা, প্রথম সং ১০৬৭, ২য় পুনর্মুদ্রণ ১৯৬০, ১২+২০৪ পৃ।

## বাংলার রচিত ও প্রকাশিত

### নির্বাচিত প্রবন্ধ ও ভাষ্যাদির তালিকা

- ‘গলতল্লের হিসাব নিকাশ’—প্রবালী, ২৫শ ভাগ, প্রথম খণ্ড, ভাদ্র, ১০০২, ৬৫০—৬৬৪ পৃ।  
 ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথের পূর্ববী’—প্রবালী, ২৫শ ভাগ, ২য় খণ্ড, চৈত্র, ১০০২, ৭৯৭—৮০২ পৃ।  
 ‘অঙ্গুষ্ঠ রদ্যার শিল্প-পরিচর’—প্রবালী, ২৭শ ভাগ, ১ম খণ্ড, আষাঢ়, ১০০৪, ৩৬১—৩৬৮ পৃ।  
 ‘বিবিধ সংগ্রহ’—বিচিত্রা, প্রথম বর্ষ, প্রথম খণ্ড, আষাঢ় ১০০৪—অগ্রহায়ণ, ১০০৪, ১৫০, ১৫২, ১৫৫, ৩১০, ৩১৩, ৩৬৮, ৪৫০, ৪৫৬, ৪৫৯ ও ৪৬১ পৃ।  
 (স্পোর্টার্স অডীত, কাইজারের বাল্য ও কৈশোর, রয়্যাল ম্যাডেনার আদর্শ পাইরাহিলেন কোথায়, পম্পাই-এর দোসর, জাপানের নৃতন সম্রাট, টেমসনের ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ’, লাইব্রেরীর জন্মকথা, সাহিত্যিক জালিয়াতি, কাইজারের শিল্পমন্দির ও চীনা ভাষার মৃতিদাতা।)  
 ‘বব্বীপে ভারতীর উপনিবেশ’—প্রবালী, ২৭শ ভাগ, ১ম খণ্ড, আশ্বিন, ১০০৪, ৮১২—৮২১ পৃ।  
 (প্রবন্ধটি বঙ্গ রচনা, দ্বিতীয় লেখক ডক্টর বিজনরাজ চট্টোপাধ্যায়।)  
 ‘রামায়ণের রাজ্য-বিজয় (বব্বীপে রামায়ণ)’—প্রবালী, ২৭শ ভাগ, ২য় খণ্ড, চৈত্র, ১০০৪, ৭৮০—৭৯১ পৃ।  
 ‘সাহিত্যের আভিজাত্য’—প্রবালী, ২৮শ ভাগ, ২য় খণ্ড, মাঘ, ১০০৫, ৫৫৫—৫৬১ পৃ।  
 (রংপুর সারস্বত সম্মিলনের দ্বিতীয় বার্ষিক অধিবেশনে সভাপতির ভাষণ।)  
 ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথের রূপকনাট্যের ভূমিকা’—ভারতবর্ষ, সপ্তদশ বর্ষ, প্রথম খণ্ড, প্রাবল, ১০০৬, ২১৮—২২৯ পৃ।  
 ‘রবীন্দ্র-প্রতিভার উৎস’—ভারতবর্ষ, সপ্তদশ বর্ষ, প্রথম খণ্ড, কার্তিক, ১০০৬, ৬৬৫—৬৮১ পৃ।



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ‘বিসর্জন নাটকের ভূমিকা’—প্রবাসী, ২৯শ ভাগ। দ্বিতীয় খণ্ড, পৌষ, ১৩৩৬, ৪২৭—৪৩৭ পৃ।
- ‘শরণ সাহিত্যের ভূমিকা’—বিচিত্রা, চতুর্থ বর্ষ, প্রথম খণ্ড, আষাঢ়, ১৩৩৭, ৩—১৩ পৃ।
- ‘প্রাচীন ভারতের ভাস্কর শিল্প’—বিচিত্রা, চতুর্থ বর্ষ, দ্বিতীয় খণ্ড, ফাল্গুন, ১৩৩৭, ৩০৬—৩১২, চৈত্র, ১৩৩৭, ৪৬৮—৪৭৪, বৈশাখ, ১৩৩৮, ৬৯৯—৭০০ পৃ।
- ‘শিল্পী অর্ধেন্দুপ্রসাদ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়’—প্রবাসী, ৩১শ ভাগ, দ্বিতীয় খণ্ড, ১৩৩৮, ৭২১—৭২৫ পৃ।
- ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথের ছোটগল্প’—বিচিত্রা, পঞ্চম বর্ষ, প্রথম খণ্ড, ভাদ্র, ১৩৩৮, ১৬৬—১৭৮ পৃ।
- ‘প্রাধ্বা-নিবেদন’—বিচিত্রা, পঞ্চম বর্ষ, প্রথম খণ্ড, আশ্বিন, ১৩৩৮, ৩৩৯—৩৪২ পৃ।
- (রবীন্দ্রনাথের স্মৃতি বৎসর পুঁতিতে প্রাধ্বা-নিবেদন।)
- ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথের শেষের কবিতা (সমালোচনা প্রবন্ধ)’—বিচিত্রা, পঞ্চম বর্ষ, দ্বিতীয় খণ্ড, মাঘ, ১৩৩৮, ৪৫—৫২ পৃ।
- বিভূতিভূষণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের ‘অপরাজিত’—বিচিত্রা, ষষ্ঠ বর্ষ, প্রথম খণ্ড, কার্তিক, ১৩৩৯, ৫৬৫—৫৭১ পৃ।
- ‘গুরুদেব জেলার নতুন বৌদ্ধশিল্পের আবিষ্কার’—প্রবাসী, ৩৩শ ভাগ, দ্বিতীয় খণ্ড, মাঘ, ১৩৪০, ৫১০—৫২২ পৃ।
- ‘প্রাচীন বাঙলার ধন সম্বল’—সাহিত্য পরিষৎ পত্রিকা, বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ, কলিকাতা, ১৩৪৭, ৪৭শ বর্ষ, ৩য় সংখ্যা, ১৭৬—২০৬ পৃ।
- ‘প্রাচীন বাঙলার শ্রেণী বিভাগ’—সাহিত্য পরিষৎ পত্রিকা, বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ, কলিকাতা, ৪৭শ ভাগ, ৪র্থ সংখ্যা, ১৩৪৭, ২৭০—২৮৫ পৃ।
- ‘প্রাচীন বাঙলার ভূমি-ব্যবস্থা’—সাহিত্য পরিষৎ পত্রিকা, বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ, কলিকাতা, ৪৮শ ভাগ, ১৩৪৮, ১৬৯—১৮৮ পৃ, ৪৯শ ভাগ, ১৩৪৯, ১২—২৮ পৃ।
- ‘খণ্ডিত সাম্রাজ্যীনা ও অখণ্ড সাহিত্যদৃষ্টি’—জ্ঞানি, তৃতীয় বর্ষ, নব পর্বার, একাদশ সংখ্যা, পৌষ, ১৩৬১, ৮১০—৯০৪ পৃ।
- (নিখিল ভারত বঙ্গ-সাহিত্য সম্মেলনের গ্রন্থাং, লক্ষ্মী, ১৩৬১, অধিবেশনে মূল সভাপতির অভিভাষণ।)
- রবীন্দ্র-কাব্যের ‘শেষ অধ্যায়’—রবীন্দ্রনাথ-উত্তরগঙ্গ, ইন্ডিয়ানা, কলিকাতা, ১৯৬১, ৮০—১০১ পৃ।
- ‘মুদ্রা চিত্রকলার নতুন নিদর্শন’—শারদীয়া বৃহস্পতি, ১০, ৪১, ৪০, ৪৬, ৫৪, ৬০ পৃ।
- ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও ভারতীয় ঐতিহ্য’—রবীন্দ্রনাথ, পুঁতিনবিহারী সেন সম্পাদিত, ২য় খণ্ড, বাক্-সাহিত্য, কলিকাতা, ১৩৬৮, ১০—২৬ পৃ।
- ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইতিহাস-চেতনা’—চতুর্গুণ ত্রৈমাসিক, কলিকাতা, প্রাক, ১৩৭১, ১৮৮—২০৫ পৃ।
- ‘গান্ধীজী’—জ্ঞানি, দ্বিতীয় বর্ষ, তৃতীয় পর্বার, চতুর্থ সংখ্যা, অক্টোবর-ডিসেম্বর, ১৯৬৯, ১—১৯ পৃ।
- ‘সমাবর্তন ভাষণ’ (Convocation Address), উত্তরবঙ্গ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, শিলিগুড়ি, ১৯৬১।
- ‘আধুনিক বাংলা সাহিত্য ও সমাজ’—উদ্বীচী বার্ষিকী, বিবেকানন্দ বিহার, নয়া দিল্লী, ১৯৭০, ৬৯—৭২ পৃ। (মৌখিক বক্তৃতার প্রতিলিপি।)
- ‘টমসনের রবীন্দ্রনাথ’—বিচিত্রা, কলিকাতা, ভাদ্র, ১৩৩৪, ৩৬৮—৩৭১ পৃ।
- ‘উপনিষদে আলোকপাথ’—বিশ্ববাসী মাসিকপত্র, কলিকাতা, ১ম বর্ষ, ১ম ও ২য় সংখ্যা, বৈশাখ, ১৩৩৪, ৪৭—৪৯ ও জ্যৈষ্ঠ, ১৩৩৪, ১২৬—১৩০ পৃ।
- ‘পূর্ব ও পশ্চিম’—বিশ্ববাসী মাসিকপত্র, কলিকাতা, ১ম বর্ষ, ৪র্থ সংখ্যা, প্রাক, ১৩৩৪, ২৬৫—২৭২ পৃ।
- ‘সাহিত্যে নীতি ও নীতি’ : একখানি পত্র, শ্রীযুক্ত শরণচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় সমীপে, আত্মশ্রুতি, সাত্তাহিক পত্র, কলিকাতা, ২য় বর্ষ, ১৩৩৪, ৩০শ সংখ্যা, ৪, ১০—১৪ পৃ, ২য় বর্ষ, ৩১শ সংখ্যা, ৭—৯, ১৫ পৃ।



‘মুকুলচন্দ্রের রূপায়ণ’—আত্মশীল সামতাহিক পত্র, ২য় বর্ষ, ১৩৩৪, ৪৭শ সংখ্যা, ৫—৬ পৃ।

(শিল্পী মুকুলচন্দ্র দেবের জিভের পরিচয়।)

‘প্রাচীন বাংলার পঞ্চদশ’—বিশ্বভারতী পত্রিকা, প্রাবল-আশ্বিন, ১৩৫৪, পৃ ১৬—২৪।

‘বাঙালীর আদিধর্ম’—বিশ্বভারতী পত্রিকা, ১৩৫৫, পৃ ২৮৪—২৯১।

যাঁরা নীহাররঞ্জনকে বই উৎসর্গ করেছেন :

প্রমোদ মিত্র  
প্রমথনাথ বিশী  
দিনেশ দাস

দিলীপ রায়  
নরেন্দ্রনাথ ভট্টাচার্য  
নারায়ণ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়

জ্যোতির্ময় রায়

### BIOGRAPHICAL COMMENTS ON NIHARRANJAN RAY

1. Calcutta University, Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Silver Jubilee Volume PRACHYAVIDYA-TARANGINI, biographical sketch by D. R. Das and Comments by K. K. Dasgupta pp. 353-358.
২. মাসিক কদম্বতী, প্রাবল ১৩৭৪, ৬৭৬ পৃ।
3. *Enlite Weekly*, Baroda, Saturday, November 25, 1967.
4. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, July 5, 1970.  
Article by R. K. Dasgupta.
5. *The Economic Times*, October 20, 1974.

## CONTRIBUTORS

1. F. R. Allchin is on the Faculty, Board of Oriental Studies at Cambridge University, U.K.
2. N. N. Bhattacharya is at the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Calcutta University.
3. G. M. Bongard-Levin is a member of the Instituta Vostokovedeniya, Moscow, USSR.
4. Debabrata Bose is a Member of the Governing Body, Bose Institute, Calcutta.
5. Dilip Kumar Chakrabarty is at the Department of History, Delhi University.
6. Bipan Chandra is at the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
7. Margaret Chatterjee is at the Department of Philosophy, Delhi University.
8. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya is an ICHR Fellow attached to the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.
9. D. P. Chattopadhyay is at the Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University.
10. Abdul Momin Chaudhury is at the Department of History, Dacca University, Bangladesh.
11. Sisir Kumar Das is at the Department of Bengali, Delhi University.
12. Barun De is at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.
13. Devangana Desai is an ICSSR Fellow, Bombay.
14. Asok Kumar Ghosh is at the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta.
15. A. B. M. Habibullah is Chairman, University Grants Commission, Dacca, Bangladesh.
16. Shahanara Hussain is at the Department of History, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh.
17. Iqtidar Alam Khan is at the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University.
18. Trevor O. Ling is at the Department of Comparative Religion, University of Manchester, U.K.
19. Debala Mitra is at the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.
20. Harbans Mukhia is at the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
21. Pratapaditya Pal is at the Indian and Islamic Art Section of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, U.S.A.
22. Ratan Parimoo is at the Department of Art History, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.
23. Aniruddh Ray is at the Department of Islamic History and Culture, Calcutta University.

## HISTORY AND SOCIETY

24. Amita Ray is at the Department of Archaeology, Calcutta University.
25. Dale Riepe is at the Department of Philosophy, State University of New York, Buffalo, U.S.A.
26. Walter Ruben is Professor Emeritus, Humboldt University, East Berlin, G.D.R.
27. Satish Saberwal is at the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
28. H. D. Sankalia is at Deccan College, Pune.
29. Hitesranjan Sanyal is at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.
30. R. S. Sharma is at the Department of History, Delhi University.
31. I. D. Serebrayakov is a member of the Instituta Vostokovedeniya, Moscow, USSR.
32. Asok Sen is at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.
33. Romila Thaper is at the Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
34. J. P. S. Uberoi is at the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi.

## Errata

Page	Line	Instead of	Read
118	10	back (figure 1).	back.
120	9	forms (figures 4, 5).	forms (figure 4).
120	21	Lothal (figures 6, 7).	Lothal (figures 5, 6).
120	28	tree (figure 8).	tree (figure 7).
121	28-29	body (figure 9). In	body. In
122	8	type (figure 10).	type.
122	18	hand (figure 11).	hand.
122	20	(figure 12) which	(figure 8) which
127	27	male busts	male bust
127	28	(figures 13, 14) seem	seem
127	30	these figures	this figure
127	31	as <i>shamans</i> or priests	as <i>shaman</i> or priest
127	36	Harappa (figure 15) is	Harappa (Plate 4) is
128	14	(figure 16) and	and
128	14	Mohenjodaro (figure 17).	Mohenjodaro (Plate 1)
600	15	dialogue with an	dialogue with and







